MY RECOLLECTIONS

PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL

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BY

PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL

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TO

E. B.

IN MEMORY OF THE THIRTEENTH.

PREFACE

THIS book has no pretensions to be anything else but a simple narration of things I have seen, and descriptions of people I have met. It does not aspire to be considered as a volume of memoirs destined to clear up historical points of interest. It is merely a little book of recollections which perhaps may amuse those who have lived through the same scenes, and moved in the same circles that I have done in various parts of Europe. Existence nowadays is such a rush that the events of yesterday are just as much forgotten as those of a century ago, and I dare say that very few men and women will be found who give a thought to what happened ten or twenty years ago. Everything changes so quickly that it has seemed to me it would be interesting to fix the remembrance of those last days of the century which so recently came to an end. The whole aspect of the political and social world was then so entirely different from what it has become since the commanding personality of Prince Bismarck was withdrawn from the stage of this world's affairs.

PREFACE

When I entered society, the German Empire had been scarcely three years in existence. France was writhing still in the convulsions of her late defeat; Russia was slowly trying to recover the many advantages of which the Crimean war had deprived her. Motor-cars were unknown, electric light was still spoken of as something quite extraordinary, and the telephone was not yet one of the resources of civilisation. Manners, too, were different from those which prevail to-day. The hunt after notoriety had not transformed individuals into self-advertising personages of a stamp which is only too familiar. Society was quieter, more sedate; adventurers had still a bad time of it, and the American element had not altogether invaded us. Whilst I was writing this book, I often asked myself whether it was possible that I had lived in times so entirely different from the present.

It is because society has altered that this book may amuse some people and bore others. The only merit I will claim for it is, that it is a true account of events of which I am cognisant. Personal feeling has played such an important part alike in the German and Russian Courts that it is only by knowing people that one can understand political incidents. I have tried to make the book just in its appreciation of indi-

viduals, and if I have wounded any susceptibilities such has been far from my intention. I have met with many kindnesses in the world, and after all I have not found it such a bad one; perhaps because I have never asked much from it, having tried to practise the maxim of Beaumarchais, that it is better to laugh than to cry. I have come across bad people, of course, but I have also met characters such as those of the late Emperor and Empress Frederick, who alone would convince the greatest of misanthropes to acknowledge the more lofty claims of humanity. My book, I hope, will be accepted by its readers for what I have meant it to be—a tribute of gratitude to some people and of kind feelings to others. More than that it does not profess to be.

CATHERINE RADZIWILL.

London, August 17th, 1904.

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MY RECOLLECTIONS

CHAPTER I.

My Birth and Ancestry—The Family Curse—The Golden-bearded Hetman—My Family Home—My Father and his First Wife—Korsoun—My Father's Brothers—A Dangerous Mission—Emperor Nicholas I.—A Family Ghost Story—The Empress Eugénie—The New Emperor—'The Burial-ground of the Czars'—My Father's Noble Character.

I WAS born on the 30th of March, 1858, in St. Petersburg. My father, Count Adam Rzewuski, belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Poland. One of his aunts had been the wife of King Stanislas Leszczinski (not Leczinski, as the French generally spell it), the father of the consort of Louis XV. His great-grandfather is remembered to this day as one of the heroes of Polish History; he was among the few nobles whom Catherine II. of Russia complimented by having them seized one night and carried off to Siberia, so thoroughly did she fear their opposition to her favourite, King Stanislas Poniatowski. One of my ancestors had besieged the Kremlin at Moscow, and taken it by storm at the time of the false Demetrius, during the reign of King Sigismund Augustus. Another had died from wounds received at the famous siege of Vienna by Kara Mustapha. He was a personal friend of King John Sobieski, and he left behind

him the memory of a great name and an unblemished reputation. We came of a strong, clever, brave race, famous for personal courage and remarkable intelligence; indeed there is a proverb which says 'the wit of a Rzewuski,' just as one speaks in France of 'l'esprit des Mortemart,' but we were never a lucky or a happy race. The shadow of a curse lay upon us—a curse which like the secret of the Strathmores has been transmitted from father to son, and darkened the lives of all those who bore our name. Tradition says that in bygone days a Rzewuski walled up his mother alive in one of the towers of their old castle, and that she cursed all their descendants, and prophesied for them ill luck in all they would attempt to do, and either a violent or a sudden death. The prediction has been strangely fulfilled, for scarcely a member of my family has died in his or her bed, and certainly misfortune has dogged their footsteps. Gifted with singular personal beauty, with the rarest qualities of heart and mind, they have never known what happiness was, and led, most of them, miserable lives. One of my aunts was a friend of the ill-fated Queen Marie Antoinette, and like her, perished on the scaffold. People say that as she was about to be seized by the executioner, she turned round, and facing the angry crowd for the last time, shouted out in a loud voice, 'Vive la Reine!'

Her daughter, rescued later on by my grandfather, married her cousin, Wenceslas Rzewuski, who also met with a strange fate. He was one

of the leaders of the great Polish mutiny of the year 1830, and disappeared mysteriously during the battle of Daszow. A legend says he made his escape to the East, and lived there for many years in the mountains of Libanus. He had been before that a great traveller in Syria and an admirer of Lady Hester Stanhope, and among his family papers my father had curious letters from her addressed to the golden-bearded Hetman, as he is called to this day in Little Russia, where minstrels still wander, singing ballads about him and his exploits. His sword was picked up on the battlefield by a Russian officer, who was killed himself at the siege of Sevastopol, and when dying gave it to my father, who always looked upon it as one of his most precious possessions. It bears the following inscription in Polish: 'Sewerin Rzewuski, second Hetman of the Republic, son of Wenceslas Rzewuski, great Hetman of the Republic, grandson of Stanislas Rzewuski, great Hetman of the Republic, gives this sword to his son and comrade Wenceslas Sewerin, for the defence of faith and liberty.' What became of the owner of the weapon no one knows, and he rests in his unconsecrated grave, far away from all his kindred, from all those he loved and who loved him.

He left three sons: the youngest entered the Russian service and was killed in the Caucasus. The eldest, Stanislas, was at one time a candidate for the throne of Belgium, and died from a fall from his horse. The only one who survived sold the old family castle to Prince Sanguszko in the hope,

he said, of doing away with the curse, and it is still one of the show places of Poland. The bones of our murdered ancestress were, it seems, found by him, during some reparations done to the walls, but how far this is true I know not. My father was always very touchy on the point, and never liked to hear it mentioned in his presence. He had quarrelled with his cousin in consequence of this sale, the latter having refused to dispose of the property to one of his own family in spite of their having repeatedly made him offers to buy it, and though they made it up at last, yet relations between them were never very cordial. I don't remember having seen my uncle, though I have a very faint remembrance of his mother, my aunt Rosalie, the daughter of Marie Antoinette's friend. She died in 1865, and I was taken to see her a year before that at Warsaw, where she lived, and where she occupied a position almost regal in its importance. She was a tall, thin old woman, with piercing eyes, and a wig which deeply impressed my childish imagination. She had been a great friend of my mother's, in spite of the disparity in their ages, and I found among the latter's papers a great number of letters from her which told me a good deal about our family history. She had an immense reputation for cleverness, and was perhaps more feared than liked. Her only daughter, Calixte, married the Duke of Sermoneta, and was the mother of the present holder of the title, the husband of the once lovely Miss Wilbraham. She died young, regretted by all who knew her, leaving

behind her the sweet remembrance of one of those beings almost too perfect for this world. Her son has inherited a great deal of her personal charm and good looks, and he is undoubtedly one of the few very clever men Italy can boast of at the present time.

The Duchess of Sermoneta and her brother were the last representatives of the elder branch of our house. It is now extinct, and my father with his sisters were the only survivors of all that generation. He was himself the second son of the last ambassador the Polish Republic sent to London and to Copenhagen, where his portrait may be seen in the public picture gallery. My grandfather must have been a remarkably handsome man; his face and figure appear singularly expressive as they detach themselves from the canvas. The eyes have a dreamy expression, and the smile a mixture of mockery and mournfulness, which makes it strangely attractive. It is the image of a grand Seigneur of the olden times, and the haughtiness one sees behind the grace of the attitude, makes one realise and understand the character of a man who, if we are to believe the reputation he left behind him, was always faithful to the motto of his race, 'Offend not, and do not forgive offences.'

Our family has always played a great part in politics; since the fifteenth century my ancestors' names figure in all the important events and crises which finally led to the partition of Poland. As unfortunately was but too often the case in that country, they were often divided amongst them-

selves, and one brother was fighting on one side whilst the other gave his adherence to the opposite party. My great-uncle, the grandfather of the Duchess of Sermoneta, was one of the nobles who signed the famous confederation of Targowice, which practically gave up the country to the Russians. He was naturally hated by his countrymen, but subsequent events have proved that he was right, and had his advice been followed the Republic might have preserved a good many of its liberties, and acquired a strength it sadly needed. But as is usually the case with the wise he was not listened to, and to this day his political *rôle* is not understood by many people. His brother, who in opposition to him was one of the members of the Confederation of Bar, married an heiress, the daughter of Prince Michael Radziwill, and of the last descendant of the famous Prince Jeremiah Wiszniowiecki. She brought into our family the old fortress which had been stormed at such sacrifice of human life by the bloody Prince. It stands to this day almost in the same condition as it did at the time of the great Cossack rebellion, which he crushed so ruthlessly, only the drawbridges have been replaced by permanent ones, and the ditches are planted with flowers and shrubs. But there is still standing an old pavilion which was used as a gunpowder magazine; under the long old house exist underground passages leading to the open plain, and in the park may be seen a brick column erected on the spot where Prince Jeremiah caused three hundred Cossacks to be put to the stake in one day. The place

reeks with blood, and everywhere may be seen the traces of the terrible struggle which so very nearly saw the end of the Polish Republic. It has got the traditional ghost or ghosts, and under the vault of the church all my ancestors sleep their last slumber. There rests my father, with his brothers and parents; there lie all those who have given or added something towards the reputation of our race. We are all devoted to this home of ours; we all remember the days when as children we used to run in those old rooms, and look curiously upon the old pictures of the men and women whose example we were told to follow.

My father was an exceedingly proud man—one who loved to look back upon the heroic deeds of those whose blood ran in his veins. He also was *un homme d'autrefois*, with a certain amount of prejudice, but gifted with unusual courage, and perfectly fearless as regards the opinions of the world. He was born at the very beginning of last century, on Christmas Eve, 1801. Brought up first at the Jesuit College of Lemberg, then at the Military Academy at Vienna, he entered quite young the Austrian military service, which, however, he very soon left, and in 1821 was admitted as officer in a Russian cavalry regiment. His father died in 1825, and in virtue of an arrangement with his elder brother, who did not care to take upon himself the burden of heavily encumbered family estates, he came into possession of the old home of his race. He fought brilliantly in the Turkish campaign of 1828, was wounded, and

upon his return married a lady twenty-two years older than himself, who held an immense position at the Russian Court, and, if we are to believe the letters of Princess Lieven, was at one time the flame of the Emperor Alexander I., Madame Gerebtsoff, born Princess Lapoukhyn, the sister of that Prince Lapoukhyn, who was the husband of the beautiful Madame d'Alopeus, of the 'Récit d'une Sœur' fame. Madame Gerebtsoff was gifted with unusual loveliness, to which her portraits which I have seen abundantly testify. She was also a most clever woman, who through her tact succeeded in neither making herself nor her husband ridiculous, which would have been easy considering the disparity in their ages. My father certainly owed to her the brilliant career he made, and he used always to say that she was the woman he had loved the most in his life. They had one daughter, who died young, but with her first husband Madame Gerebtsoff had had a girl one year older than my father, who, at the time of her mother's marriage, was herself the wife of Count (afterwards Prince) Orloff, the famous favourite of the Emperor Nicholas I., and one of the signatories of the Paris Treaty, whose son was afterwards for so many years Ambassador to the third Republic. I remember old Princess Orloff when I was a little girl. She had settled permanently at Florence, and there she died in 1876 or 1877. She was a formidable old lady, very clever, and who could be amiable when she liked. Her relations with my father remained always cordial, though stiff.

He had behaved with extreme delicacy in money matters after his wife's death, and both Princess Orloff and her husband showed themselves grateful, but my father, strange to say for a man of his character, stood always a little in awe of his stepdaughter, and, as far as I can remember, never felt quite at his ease in her presence; she was the only person who could cow him, and I have never been able to make out whether it was embarrassment or the memory of his dead wife which used to influence his behaviour towards the Princess. The old Prince I never saw—he died when I was quite a baby; but I can conjure to my mind one of Madame Gerebtsoff's sisters, Countess Koutaissoff, and can just remember having been taken to Korsoun, the country seat of the Lapoukhyns, and having been petted by a very old lady, who I was told was the mother of Alexandrine de La Ferronays. The circumstance which impressed her on my childish mind, was that in order to be shown to her I had been kept out of bed until eleven o'clock at night, which was the only time she appeared, having the strange habit of sleeping the whole day, and only getting up when everybody else was thinking of doing the reverse. She and her husband used to live in almost kingly state on their magnificent estate—one of the show places of Southern Russia. It has now passed into the possession of a nephew of the old Prince, who has been allowed to resuscitate the title, but the brilliant days of Korsoun are no more, and probably will never be revived

It is when I think of all these links with a past which has already become a part of history that I realise how old I am, and how very little I have got to do with the present generation. All these people whose doings and sayings formed part of my childish days, are forgotten even by their own descendants, and in telling their story it is hard for me to believe I am also relating my own.

My father had two brothers. The elder, Count Henry Rzewuski, has made for himself a name as one of the most famous authors of fiction of his time in Poland. His novels, historical ones, in the style of Sir Walter Scott's, are to the present day almost as popular as Scott's; he also wrote a few French books, but these were not of the first rank, and are now forgotten. One of them was the story of our family curse, and I remember once a discussion my father had with his brother on the subject, when I heard for the first time the words which since that day have been so often repeated in my presence whenever a new misfortune happened to one of our family, 'We owe this again to the "Kunicka,"' this being the maiden name of our dreaded ancestress.

My uncle Henry was one of the wittiest men in his country; there are innumerable sayings of his which have become public property, and which are quoted whenever the occasion arises. He died at a very advanced age in 1867; he was about fifteen or twenty years older than my father, and, consequently, all my remembrances

of him are those of a very old man, walking with great difficulty. He had an immense head, piercing eyes, with bushy eyebrows, and a generally unkempt appearance. Between him and my father there existed a great affection, although they were always quarrelling upon one subject or another. My uncle was the only ugly member of a singularly handsome family; my father, on the contrary, was one of the best-looking men of his time, and when the two brothers found nothing else to nag about, they used to start a discussion about the influence beauty has or has not on the lives of men. As they were both most brilliant talkers, it was intensely amusing to listen to their conversations, which I only regret I was too young to appreciate as they ought to have been.

My uncle died from heart disease quite suddenly, at the last, though he had been ill for a long time. He left no son, only two daughters, one of whom became the mother of that lovely Madame de Kolemine, whose marriage with the Grand Duke of Hesse, followed as it was the next day by a divorce, made such a stir at the time it happened. I shall have a good deal to say about it later on.

My father's younger brother, who, if not quite so brilliant as the other members of the family, was nevertheless a very clever man, died in the early sixties. I don't remember having seen much of him; but his son, who perished during the Turkish campaign of 1877–78, was a frequent visitor at our house. He left no male pos-

terity, so I will have nothing further to say about him, except that he had the reputation of being one of the handsomest men, as well as one of the bravest officers, in the Czar's service.

To come back to my father, I will say that after his marriage with Madame Gerebtsoff he settled in St. Petersburg, and in a very short time became not only a general favourite in society, but also of the Emperor Nicholas I., who, up to his death, reposed in him the greatest confidence, and several times entrusted him with missions of importance abroad.

During the Polish mutiny of 1830 my father was aide-de-camp to Field-Marshal Diebitch, in command of the Russian army. At one time the position of the Russian troops was most critical. The Army Corps commanded by General Rudiger was completely cut off from its communication with headquarters, and the insurgents commanded by General Dwernicki caught every one of the officers sent by the Field-Marshal with orders to General Rudiger. The situation was becoming very serious, when Count Diebitch sent for my father, and, after warning him that were he to be taken prisoner, it would not mean for him captivity but death, on account of his Polish nationality, he asked him whether he would undertake to cross the lines of the insurgents, and transmit verbal orders to the invested General. My father at once accepted the mission, and, disguising himself as a pedlar, succeeded after three weeks, in making his way through the whole of the Polish army without

being recognised, and, reaching General Rudiger, gave him the information which allowed the latter to take once more the offensive, and to join the headquarters, with the result that Dwernicki, together with Ramorino, another leader of the mutineers, was compelled to seek refuge across the Austrian frontier, and to lay down their arms there. I have often heard my father relate the details of this adventurous journey, during which he risked his life the whole time; for there is little doubt he would have met with no mercy at the hands of the Poles. His name would have singled him out for a swift retribution. This daring deed had, I believe, much to do with the ultimate success of his career, though he would never himself own it was the case, and it had a sequel, which I must relate, as it honours my father just as much as it does that much-caluminated sovereign, the Emperor Nicholas I.

It is not generally known that he was passionately attached to his Polish army, and not only did he keenly feel the treason with which his good intentions were repaid, but he was particularly incensed at the fact of his former troops having sought refuge in Austria, instead of trusting to his own generosity. When the mutiny was at last suppressed he had the colours of the few regiments who had not been able to cross the frontier put up in the Kremlin at Moscow, with an inscription saying that these were the flags of the traitorous Polish army, who had broken all its oaths to its sovereign. My father happened to hear of this

intention of the Emperor's a few days before it was actually executed, and he wrote to him a letter begging him to reconsider his decision, and not to give way to his resentment in a manner which would harm him before history and posterity. It was a beautiful letter, full of feeling and respect for his sovereign, but at the same time one of the most daring epistles that has ever been addressed by a subject to a monarch. After making an allusion to his own fidelity to his oath, he ended with the words, 'I beg your Majesty not to sully his glory by an act of mean revenge, and to remember that it is preferable for a sovereign to have on his brow a stain of blood than one of mud.' I will repeat the words in French, as they are more expressive, and convey their meaning better than in an English translation: 'Je supplie Votre Majesté de se souvenir qu'il est parfois préférable pour un Souverain d'avoir sur son front une tâche de sang qu'une tâche de boue.' If one remembers what kind of monarch was Nicholas, and at what time that letter was written, one can only marvel at the courage of a young man in thus addressing him; but the Emperor was one of these generous souls who understand nobility and generosity in others. He rose to the occasion, and sent the letter to my father's wife, with the remark, 'Je vous renvoie la lettre de votre mari, Madame; comme Souverain je devrais punir, comme ami, je veux oublier.'

Few historical personages have been more maligned than the Emperor Nicholas, and to me,

who have had the opportunity to hear the truth, it is often a wonder to read and listen to all the lies that are told about him. In reality the Emperor was one of the most generous of men, and he was simply worshipped by all those who had ever had anything to do with him. I will describe in another book life at the court of that northern potentate, and how different it was from what is commonly known about it. The anecdote I have just related will perhaps change some people's minds about the great-grandfather of my present sovereign.

During this same Polish campaign a curious adventure befell my father, which perhaps will interest all lovers of the supernatural. In order to make people understand it, I must say that one of my ancestors, the same one who was seized and thrown into captivity by the great Catherine, had died and been buried in a little town in the kingdom of Poland called Chelm. The condition of the country was so troubled at the time that it was not possible to convey the body to the family burial-ground. Now, on the eve of the battle of Grochow, one of the important engagements of the war, my father, who in the meanwhile had been promoted to the command of the Cuirassier Regiment of Prince Albert of Prussia, was asleep in his tent and dreamed that he saw an old man, whom he recognised from the pictures he had seen to be his great-grandfather, enter his tent. He noticed that he wore the old Polish dress, with yellow boots worn out at the toes. The ghost, if one may call it by

that name, sat down beside his bed, and told him he was his ancestor, and that the vault in which he was buried had that very night been broken open by the mutineers, and his body taken out of its coffin and put against the wall. He added that my father was to go to Chelm and to bring it to the family grave to be reburied there, and also to erect two crosses in memory of the event, one in the park, and another in a spot which he carefully indicated at the turning of the high road leading to the house on the family property. He added that my father would be wounded the next day. Well, that next day the battle took place, and my father was shot in the leg. He was ill for a long time, and, it must be owned, forgot all about his dream. More than ten years later he happened to be at Chelm with the Emperor for some manœuvres, and curiosity led him to the church. It had been closed ever since the mutiny, but my father insisted upon the vault being opened for him, and when he entered it he saw his grandfather's body standing erect against the wall, in the very dress and the same worn-out boots he had seen him in, on the night of his dream. He had the body removed and buried it on his estate, and the two crosses stand to this day as a commemoration of an event which, to say the very least, must be called singular.

After the mutiny my father hardly ever left the Emperor. He was appointed to be in special attendance upon him, and this distinction, which was quite apart from that of General Adjutant, which he

got later on, has been shared with very few people in Russia. When the Sultan Abdul Medjid ascended the throne, my father was sent as a special ambassador to congratulate him on his accession, and at the same time was entrusted with the mission of going on to Egypt and stopping with a threat of Russian intervention Mehemet Ali from continuing his march on Constantinople. Later on he took part in the Hungarian campaign, and was selected to convey to the town of Moscow the news of the final victory of the Russian troops. In 1851 he went to Spain on a diplomatic mission with a view of re-establishing relations between the Russian Government and that of Queen Isabella. In the correspondence of Count Raczynski, then Prussian Minister at the Court of Madrid, with Donoso Cortès, which was published a few years ago, curious details are given about my father's arrival and stay in the Spanish capital. He remained there rather longer than he intended at first, and among the souvenirs he carried away from this journey were a Madonna by Murillo, which was given to him by the Queen, and—dearer still—the remembrance of a most lovely girl to whom he entirely lost his heart, and who, a few years later, occupied the attention of the world when she married the Emperor of the French.

I have often heard my father speak of the Empress Eugénie, and the extraordinary impression her supreme loveliness produced on all those who saw her. He had been very much struck with her cleverness as well as with the brilliancy of her

conversation, and used always to maintain that her intelligence equalled, if not surpassed, her beauty. When the disaster of Sedan put an end to the worldly career of the Countess de Teba, and when later on the Prince Imperial fell in Zululand, my father was strangely moved, and for some time could neither speak nor think of anything else. 'Poor Empress! poor Empress!' he used to say, 'how will she bear it?'

Madame Gerebtsoff died about that time, a few months, I think, before my father's mission to Madrid, though I am not quite sure about the date. She was ill for long weeks, and I have often heard my grandmother speak of the devotion with which her husband nursed her, adding that it had encouraged her to allow my mother to marry him, in spite of the disparity in their ages and the difference in their religions.

I shall speak later on of my mother, and her family. My father married her in 1853; she was one of the loveliest women at the Russian Court, and at the Coronation of the Emperor Alexander II. was considered the most beautiful one among all those who attended it. During her short married life the Crimean war took place, and in its early stages my father was in command of a division at Eupatoria. He was, however, soon recalled and appointed Military Governor of St. Petersburg. It was whilst he was occupying this position that the Emperor Nicholas died; and with his disappearance my father's career came virtually to an end. He was never liked by Alexander II., and did not

escape the fate which overtakes all the favourites of a reign when it passes away. He was given one more command during the second Polish mutiny of 1863, but very soon after that he retired from active service and settled on his estates in the south of Russia, where he died on Palm Sunday, the 17th of April, 1888. The Emperor Alexander II. had never liked him, and never forgiven his independence of speech nor a certain reply he had made to him on a memorable occasion. It was after the last Polish rebellion. Harsh measures were adopted by the Government against the landowners of the South Provinces who had either taken part in, or sympathised with the insurrection. A deputation went to St. Petersburg to present an address to the sovereign, begging for clemency. My father was asked to head it, to which he consented. Some mischievous person, with the intention of harming him, told the Emperor he meant to make a speech. At the same time he was himself warned that the sovereign did not wish him to do so. The deputation was introduced into the Imperial presence; my father read the address, after which ensued a painful silence, each party waiting for the other to speak. At last Alexander II., growing impatient, seized my father by the arm, and leading him to the window, whence could be seen the golden spires of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, where at that time political prisoners were confined, he exclaimed in a threatening tone, 'Rzewuski, do you see?' 'Yes, your Majesty,' was my father's cool reply, 'the burial-ground of the Czars.' The

Emperor dropped his arm, but it was a long time before he would speak to him again.

I have perhaps lingered too long over all these anecdotes concerning my father, but I would have liked to be able to give to my readers a just idea of the qualities which made of him such a remarkable personality. Very few people are now alive who remember him, and I think it a great pity that before his death he destroyed the very curious memoirs he had written, which certainly would have thrown a new light on the reign of the Emperor Nicholas. My father was not only clever, he was also a *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, incapable of a mean act, always brave, always ready to defend the weak, to help the distressed. His kindness surpassed anything I have ever seen; he was never weary of helping others, and used his great position for the good of many who afterwards repaid him with the vilest ingratitude. And yet he was disliked by many people. His independence, the fearlessness with which he used to express his opinions, made him dreaded by high and low. He did not spare on his side those whom he disliked, and the sharpness of his tongue often wounded when it was not necessary. He had a marvellous self-control and a ready wit, that always took his opponents unawares. This, combined with a certain haughtiness, which in spite of the extreme courtesy that was one of his characteristics, he could not quite subdue, helped to make him unpopular with a certain class of people. As some one once remarked, 'Rzewuski will always shake

hands with you, but then he has got such a d——d way of making you feel that he is going to wash them afterwards.' The words were true, and they explain certain animosities which pursued my father during his whole life, and even after his death. But friends or foes, all those who ever met him recognised his immense intelligence, and the extraordinary insight he had into politics, as well as the great learning which made him one of the most remarkable personages of his time. It would be hard to meet a man whose conversation was brighter or more instructive, whose knowledge was more universal, or whose powers of assimilation were greater. Everything interested him; with every person he came into contact, no matter how dull he or she might be, he found a subject of conversation. He was an attractive man, a clever man; and he was also something better than either, he was a good man.

CHAPTER II.

My Aunts—Madame Lacroix' Deception—Her Salon—The Bibliophile Jacob—M. de St. Amand—Madame de Balzac—The True Story of the Balzacs—What is Happiness?—The Hotel Balzac—L'Abbé Constant—The Commune—'Madame' and 'Citoyenne.'

I HAD four aunts, all of them beautiful, all of them clever—one extraordinarily so, and all of them women who made their mark in the world. One of them was a favourite of the celebrated Madame de Krudener, and made society ring with the fame of her loveliness at the beginning of last century. She was the eldest of her whole family, and treated my father as if he were still a little boy. She had married three times, buried one husband, divorced the second, and led the life of the *grandes dames* of the eighteenth century who loved so well and so often. After the Revolution of 1848 she settled permanently in Paris, and married a French author, M. Jules Lacroix, the brother of the famous Bibliophile Jacob. There is an amusing anecdote connected with that marriage. At the time it took place my aunt was far advanced in the sixties, but she had kept her good looks in such an extraordinary way that one could easily have taken her for a woman of forty. At the time she was born, registers were kept very slackly in Poland, and most of them were destroyed during the civil wars.

My aunt could not produce her birth certificate when she was married to M. Lacroix, and had to replace it by a declaration as to her age and parentage. A few months after her marriage she became seriously ill, and her life was despaired of. They sent for a clergyman, who was going to administer the last rites of the Church to her, when she called her husband to her bedside, exclaiming, 'Jules, Jules, I cannot die in peace; I have deceived you!' My uncle, who it must be said, was as much in love with his wife as if she had been a girl of eighteen, was horrified, but nevertheless entreated her to be calm. But nothing would pacify her. 'Jules, Jules,' she went on, 'I have deceived you: I am ten years older than I told you!' One of my cousins, who was present at the scene, was wicked enough to burst out laughing in spite of the tragical circumstances.

Madame Caroline Lacroix was one of the notabilities of Paris; she had a salon which was as celebrated in its way as those of Madame Recamier or Madame Swetchine, and one was sure to meet at her house all the remarkable men and all the beautiful women, not only of France but of Europe. She was a brilliant conversationalist, was quite as attractive in the last years of her life as during her younger days, and people were as eager to hear her talk as they had formerly been anxious to feast their eyes upon her beauty. She was passionately fond of society, was never happy unless she had seen about twenty persons during the day, gave dinners which were as admirable from a culi-

nary point of view, as they were pleasant on account of the society one met at them. Her apartments, No. 22 Rue d'Anjou St. Honoré, were the rendezvous of literary people as well as of political personages, of journalists, and of financiers. She was always eager for new acquaintances, always desirous of adding to the number of her friends. For thirty years she held a most despotic sway on a certain circle of Paris society, and when she died it was quite an event among those who for years had come to her house for news, when for nothing else.

She retained her good looks, as well as all the freshness of her mind, until the last. She was the type of a *grande dame* of the eighteenth century, always beautifully dressed, with long flowing gowns of velvet or satin, wrapped up in old and priceless laces, sitting up erect in her chair with a figure which might have put to shame many a young girl. She had remained in Paris during the whole of the siege, and my father once got a letter from her which had been sent by a carrier pigeon, in which she said that the only thing she found hard was to be obliged to eat what she characterised as 'horrible things' (*des horreurs*). She died on the 15th of July, 1885, after an illness of three months, during which she struggled with death with all the energy of a much younger person. She had broken her right arm about a year before, and in spite of the doctors' predictions that she would not be able to use it any more, she made a wonderful recovery and could write letters

six weeks after the accident. In one word she was an extraordinary old lady, marvellous not only by her intelligence, but also by the interest she kept to the very last in all the gaieties as well as in all the important events of the world. She had also a wonderful memory, and used to relate anecdotes and describe people who long before had either entered into the domain of history, or else been forgotten by the world in which they had played a prominent part. My aunt had met Alexander I. of Russia, had conversed with the great Napoleon, could remember the marriage of Marie Louise and the birth of the King of Rome, had been present at the Opera the night that the Duke of Berri was assassinated, later on had watched Louis Philippe escape from the Tuileries, and had witnessed the entry of the Empress Eugénie at Notre Dame, on the day which saw the Imperial Crown of France put on her head. She had been in correspondence with Mazzini, had entertained Madame de Castiglione, and reckoned among her friends the Princess Lieven as well as the Duke of Morny. I don't think there was one person in Europe worth knowing that she did not know, one celebrity that had not sat at her hospitable board. When she died she was far advanced in the nineties, and she was a living encyclopædia of all the famous or clever men and women of her century.

Among the people whom one used to meet constantly at her house was her brother-in-law, the bibliophile Jacob, that amiable old man who was such a well-known member of Paris society.

He was the librarian at the Arsenal, and used to live in the old house of Sully, buried among his books, and always ready to show them to the curious visitor. One of the most brilliant talkers of his time, it was a delight to listen to him, and to hear him discuss one thing or another. After the war, however, he retired from society. He was an ardent Bonapartist, and at a time when every one was more or less turning their backs upon the unfortunate Emperor and his family, he remained true to them, and never left off proclaiming his allegiance to their cause. Personally, I am indebted to the bibliophile for the first encouragement I ever got to try my hand at literary work. Another Bonapartist who often dined at my aunt's, was the charming Baron de St. Amand, whose death a few years ago was a great source of regret to his numerous friends. M. de St. Amand was amiability itself, and if slightly superficial in his talk, he never left off being delightful. He had collected a number of anecdotes, and was never weary of relating them. I think that, with the Countess Xavier de Blacas, he was the last survivor of the group of people whom one used to meet almost daily at my aunt's. I have often talked with him about her since her death, and we always agreed in the opinion that the present generation has no great ladies of the type which she represented so well, and with such dignity.

Very different from my aunt Caroline was her sister, Madame de Balzac, the widow of the celebrated novelist, whose influence on French litera-

ture is still so powerful. The correspondence which has been published has made her a familiar figure to the public, but though it has revealed to the world the passion which one of the greatest men who have ever left their impress on the literary tendencies of their country, as well as of their century, had for her during long years, I doubt whether it has given any real knowledge as to her moral worth to those who have not had the privilege of meeting her. She has gone down to posterity as the woman whom Balzac loved, whilst she deserved to have been known as the one being to whom he was indebted for the development of his marvellous genius, and also as his collaborator in many of his works. For instance, the novel called *Modeste Mignon* is almost entirely written by her pen, and certainly some of her illustrious husband's best books have had something or other added to them by her hand. When Balzac wrote to Madame Hanska, as she was at that time called, the famous letter in which he used those remarkable words, which are the best description of love that has been ever given: 'With you moral satiety does not exist; what I tell you now is a great thing—it is the secret of happiness,' he only expressed in eloquent terms what every one who knew my aunt felt from the very first, and that was the fact that they stood in the presence of quite an exceptional being. Madame de Balzac was perhaps not so brilliant in conversation as were her brothers and sisters. Her mind had something pedantic about it, and she was rather a good

listener than a good talker, but whatever she said was to the point, and she was eloquent with her pen. Among the innumerable letters from her which I possess, either addressed to myself or my mother, there is not one which would not deserve to be printed. Political appreciations written at the time of the Crimean war, are almost prophetic in their utterances. She had that large glance only given to superior minds which allows them, according to the words of Catherine of Russia, 'to read the future in the history of the past.' She observed everything, was indulgent to every one. She had learned the truth of the old axiom, 'One must understand all, in order to forgive all.' My aunt had forgiven, and learned the hard lesson of life without being in the least embittered by it. Her large and lofty mind had risen above the vice, fret, and wretchedness of earth, until it had reached those higher regions of peace where one rests in the supreme indifference to the judgments of society, which a clear conscience alone can give.

Her marriage with Balzac had so much of romance in it, that I feel tempted to relate it, if only to correct the many untruths that have been written about it. My aunt, who had been married whilst a mere child to a man much older than herself, but possessed of immense wealth, lived a very retired life in the country, and hardly ever left Russia. Almost isolated, thrown on the companionship of a man certainly inferior to her in every way in spite of his solid qualities, she sought refuge in study and reading, in order to forget the

secret disappointments she did not care to own. She had all kinds of books sent to her, and one day she received one of Balzac's first novels; I don't remember now which of them it was. She was so impressed with it, that she wrote to the author enclosing a criticism of the work, and sent it on to his publisher. Balzac was so struck in his turn with her letter that he replied to her, and from that day they corresponded without having ever met for several years. At last they met at Geneva, and the admiration which the novelist had conceived for Madame Hanska's intellect was extended to her person. He went to see her at her Russian home, and spent months in that distant place. The house passed later on into my father's hands, who bought it from his niece the Countess Mniszech, to whom it had reverted after M. Hanska's death. The rooms which Balzac occupied are still left in the same condition they were in when the novelist used to occupy them. His portrait painted by Boulanger, of which mention is so often made in his correspondence, is hanging on the wall, the last memento of one of the great love romances of the world. I have often stood and gazed at it, and wondered at the incidents of this romance, but my aunt never liked to hear the subject mentioned, though she was passionately devoted to the memory of her illustrious husband.

When Madame Hanska became a widow it seemed as if nothing could prevent her from marrying Balzac, but, as is usual in such cases, other people interfered. Her family did not wish her

to ally herself to a personage who, according to their aristocratic prejudices, was nothing but a French novel-writer. Pecuniary considerations were put forward, and people began attributing sordid motives to Balzac. The struggle lasted for a few years, and then my aunt put an end to it by giving up all the great fortune, of which she had the disposal under her husband's will, to her daughter, who in the meantime had married Count George Mniszech. After this sacrifice she was united to the man of her choice, and thus ended 'this beautiful heart drama,' to use Balzac's own words, 'which had lasted seventeen years.' Six months later he died, and my aunt found herself for the second time a widow, with the burden of her husband's large debts and that of his great name which she bore with such dignity for thirty years longer. She never spoke of the blow his death had been to her. She must have felt it deeply, and she would not have been human if she had not cherished resentment against those whose opposition to her wishes had robbed her of some years of happiness; but if this was the case she never let any one guess it. Once only I heard her make a remark which gave me a strange insight into her inner life. We were talking about happiness in general, and I observed how very eager people were to interfere with that of their neighbours. My aunt looked at me for some time, then slowly said: 'I think that this comes from the fact that so very few people understand what real happiness is; they mostly look upon it as

a superficial thing, and treat it with that light-heartedness they apply to all the other enjoyments of existence. If they understood and realised what it really means to those who consider life in its true and serious light, they would respect it more. If I had my way I would bring children up to respect happiness just as one brings them up to respect religion. I would teach them that it must be reverenced as we do all religions, even those we do not belong to.'

I have often echoed my aunt's remark, and thought how much better humanity would be if it were educated according to the principle she had laid down on that day.

Madame de Balzac never left Paris after her husband's death, except to spend the summer at a property she had near Villeneuve St. George, called Beauregard. She had become very infirm and immensely stout. All traces of the beauty for which she had been renowned in her youth had disappeared, but the incomparable charm, which had fascinated the author of the *Comédie Humaine*, never left her. Her family, who stood more or less in awe of her, treated her with great respect and consideration. Her house was a meeting-place where all events relating to the welfare of her kindred were discussed. We all of us had a great opinion of the soundness of her judgments, and liked to consult her in any of our difficulties or embarrassments. She was always indulgent, even when severe, and Aunt Evelyn, as we used to call her, was our refuge

in many a sad hour, and a comforter in many a struggle when heart and duty were divided. We felt instinctively that she had sacrificed so much to what she considered to have been her duty, that she was the best person to point out where it really lay to those who were hesitating as to the path they ought to enter upon. My father, who was absolutely devoted to his sister, never failed to consult her whenever he was in doubt as to what he ought to do; but strange to say he was not, in spite of this feeling, in sympathy with her mind or her intellect. My aunt was very sceptical in matters of religion, and absolutely refused to bow before what she called superstitions. She had been very much under the influence of her own father, who was imbued with the Voltairean ideas which had taken hold, more or less, of every deep-thinking person at the end of the eighteenth century; she refused to accept the theory of a hell and of an eternal punishment for sin. She was very much against the influence of the clergy in private life, and always deplored the abuse which was made of religion in relations and events with which it ought never to have had anything to do. I believe she thought on this subject more strongly even than she would admit in public, for she was always very chary of hurting the feelings of her neighbour.

She never left the little house Balzac had built and arranged for her when they married. It was No. 22 Rue Balzac, on the spot where the pavilion of the financier Beaujon formerly

stood, and where may now be seen the sumptuous mansion and gardens of Baroness James de Rothschild. Except a marble slab on the wall, which records that on that spot the house in which died the author of the *Comédie Humaine* once stood, nothing remains to remind one of the two people whose love had filled the walls now pulled down and destroyed. I always avoid the street when I am in Paris. It is too painful to cross it and not to find the familiar landmarks, not to ring at the *porte cochère* which opened on the little courtyard whence one entered the house. It was a tiny habitation, full to overflowing with costly works of art, pictures, and old china. The long drawing-room with its three windows had a big fireplace, opposite which stood on a table the colossal bust of Balzac, by David d'Angers. My aunt used to sit between it and the fireplace at the middle window of the room, near a little table on which her books and knitting were laid. In this room, and near that table, all that was illustrious in French literature has congregated, and from the large arm-chair, in which she sat esconced, some of the most trenchant criticisms on modern opinions, and the events which have made our society what it is now, have been delivered. Madame de Balzac, though living absolutely retired from the world, never lost her influence over those who played a part in that world's drama or comedy.

She never, or hardly ever, entertained. Her daughter used at one time to go out a good deal in Parisian society, but the doors of the Hotel

Balzac, as it was called, were never opened in the evening save to a few old and tried friends who, on certain days of the week, used to come and dine with its mistress, and her daughter and son-in-law who lived with her. The painter Jean Gigoux was one of them, and remained my aunt's closest friend up to her death. Another personage who used to put in a regular appearance on Wednesdays, always impressed my young imagination by the legend which surrounded his name. It was the famous Abbé Constant, known in Paris as Eliphas Lévy, a priest who had left holy orders, and whose life was devoted to the study of occult sciences, on which he had written many curious books, now forgotten, except by those who take an interest in such things. L'Abbé Constant, a venerable figure with a flowing white beard, and long hair, was supposed to be gifted with the talent of prophesying, and though he absolutely refused to exercise his knowledge in our behalf, my cousins and myself were always trying to induce him to tell us our *future.* We never succeeded, except on one occasion, when the result proved to be too uncanny to be pleasant. One of the circumstances which had given great prominence to the science of fortune-telling which Eliphas Lévy was supposed to possess, was the fact that a few days before the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Sibour, was assassinated, a young man came to consult him on some business or other. The old philosopher told him to take care as he was on the point of committing a great crime. The young man, who

was none other but Verger, the murderer of the Archbishop, was so struck by this extraordinary guess, that after he was arrested he exclaimed he was sorry not to have listened to the Abbé Constant. This made a great stir at the time, the more so that Eliphas Lévy, being an unfrocked priest, was naturally an object of suspicion, and I believe he was subjected to great annoyance in consequence of his warning to the youthful assassin. Whether this had anything or not to do with his subsequent reluctance to use his supposed knowledge of the future, I cannot say, but it is certain he did not care to be reminded of it.

My aunt was very fond of the Abbé Constant. Their religious opinions were, I believe, identical, and their minds were much alike in the firm grasp they had of the grave problems which have in turn shaken humanity, and brought it from belief to incredulity, and from false knowledge to true science. They both possessed that grave indulgence which is only attained in old age, and which can afford to smile on the self-content and arrogance which is so inseparable from youth. Neither of them ever tried to impose their opinions upon others, or to convert the younger generation to their ideas. They knew that ideas as well as opinions change according as to how the lesson of life is learned, and that the young man who declares he will never alter, is not to be blamed but to be pitied for the inexperience which makes him think his judgment can never be modified by circumstances. They were both very reserved in the

presence of strangers, and both nervously afraid of inflicting pain on any living creature. I have often wondered in later years whether this dread was due to the amount of suffering which had been dealt out to them by others.

During the Franco-German war and the horrors of the Commune my aunt remained in Paris. She was very infirm, and could hardly leave her armchair, but never thought for one moment of seeking safety in flight. Her property of Beauregard was occupied by the German troops, who considerably damaged it. A good many of her manuscripts were either stolen or burned, and a marble bust of herself, the work of the Italian sculptor Bartolini, had its nose broken. In spite of our urgent request to allow the damage to be repaired, my aunt absolutely refused to do so. She was an ardent French patriot and liked to nurse the memory of her country's wrongs. The bibliophile Jacob, who was not devoid of a certain tinge of malice, declared that it was not so much the Prussians she hated as the Emperor Napoleon III., whom she accused of all the misfortunes which had followed upon the war, and whose share in it she wished to be reminded of by the sight of her noseless image. It was true that my aunt was an ardent republican, with a strong tendency to socialism, but this did not prevent her from stigmatising, as they deserved, the excesses of the Commune. And this brings me to another passage in her life, which it may perhaps amuse the public to hear.

INCIDENT DURING THE COMMUNE

During the last dreadful days of the struggle of 1871, the Hotel Balzac was invaded by a detachment of insurgents. My aunt happened to be alone in her house when they burst into it. The leader of the band entered the room in which she sat, with his cap on his head, and began addressing her as 'Citoyenne.' Madame de Balzac without showing the least discomposure, pointing with her finger to the head-dress of her interlocutor, 'Take off your hat,' she said, 'I am not used to people talking to me with their heads covered; and call me Madame, I am too old to be addressed as Citoyenne.' The man was so surprised that he hastened to obey her, and after many excuses left the house with his companions. My father was very fond of chaffing his sister on the incident, and to ask her what she would have done had the Communard proved refractory; 'I would have pulled off his cap myself,' she used to reply, 'I was not going to let that ruffian be rude to me!' upon which my father retorted by saying that she was not consistent in her radical opinions, and that she ought to have welcomed with open arms the representative of that democracy to which she professed to belong. The result was invariably a quarrel.

I have lingered more than I ought to have done on the character of my aunt, but she has exercised such a great influence on my own opinions and life that I feel I cannot dismiss her lightly, or in a few words. I owe to her all the good that is in me; I certainly am indebted to

her for any power of resistance I may possess. But for her lessons and example it is probable I would have been a different being from the one I have become, and though I might perhaps have been a better, I certainly should have been a weaker one. She taught me that though circumstances may break a human creature, they ought to be unable to make her bend under them, when any vital principle is at stake.

CHAPTER III.

My Mother's Family—The Paschkoffs—Reminiscence of the Polish Mutiny—Attempt on the Czar's Life—Character of Alexander II. - The Beautiful Princess Dagmar—Franco-Prussian War—The Surrender of Sedan—In Paris after the Commune—I am Engaged to be Married—My Presentation at Court—My Wedding.

My mother was the daughter of M. Dmitri Daschkoff, Secretary of State for Justice in the early years of the Emperor Nicholas I.'s reign. The Daschkoffs, who are quite a different family from the one to which the Princess Daschkoff, so well known in history as the friend and favourite of the Empress Catherine, belonged, are of Tartar origin, and bear as such the crescent in their coat-of-arms. A Daschkoff was sent as Ambassador to the Sublime Porte during the reign of Peter the Great. My grandfather, who died when my mother was quite a little girl, left the reputation of having been a great statesman. He worked at the reform of the penal code, and was credited with liberal opinions, which, at the time he was living, was considered more or less as a singularity. He was very much respected, and, if we are to judge from his correspondence, must have been a remarkable man. He died at a comparatively early age, leaving a young widow and three small children. My grandmother never

married again, and gave up the world absolutely after her husband's death. She was by birth a Mademoiselle Paschkoff, of Moscow. The Paschkoffs were a very wealthy family of merchant origin, who, through their immense riches, secured for their daughters alliances with the noblest blood in Russia. My grandmother had two brothers and two sisters. One of the latter married Prince Wassiltchikoff, and for many years was a foremost personage in Russian society. She was a formidable old lady, dreaded by the younger generation, who kept her numerous nephews and nieces in salutary awe of her. She had a sharp tongue, and administered rebuffs, when she thought they were deserved, with a severity which was almost merciless. Her two sons played an important part in the reform movement which signalled the first years of the Emperor Alexander II.'s reign. The eldest one, Alexander by name, was also one of the leaders of the Panslavist movement, and exercised by his writings, as well as by his opinions, a wide influence over a certain section of St. Petersburg society. He, too, died relatively young, leaving one son and two daughters, the youngest of whom was married to Count Strogonoff, and died at twenty years old in the full radiance of a marvellous beauty.

My grandmother's youngest sister became the wife of Count Lewachoff, and both her brothers left several children, one of them being the father of that Basil Paschkoff, who, owing to his adoption of the doctrines of Lord Radstock, got himself

exiled from Russia, and lived for many years in England.

Of cousins, nephews, nieces, my grandmother had a great number. There is scarcely a family in Russia which is not allied in one way or another with the Paschkoffs. The celebrated General Skobeleff was one of those who through my grandmother was a cousin of mine; and this reminds me of a most ridiculous article contributed by the late M. de Blowitz to the *Matin* about me in which he gives a most fantastical account of the marriage of Skobeleff's mother. I have often wondered where he got his information, which is devoid of one single word of truth, for certainly Mr. Poltawtsoff was not the son of a serf, and the Paschkoffs were never landowners in the Government of Poltawa. My grandmother lived to a very advanced age. She was a real saint, and when she died in the small town of Riazan, the whole population of it followed her to her grave, and all the poor of the place subscribed for a wreath to be upon her coffin, with an inscription, which we afterwards had inscribed on her tombstone. It ran thus: 'Receive her, O Lord, as she received all the poor and unfortunate.' My grandmother had never got over the shock of her only daughter's death, but she went on living for duty's sake, and tried to forget her own grief in soothing the sorrows of others. I have never met a more unselfish person. I loved her more, perhaps, than she knew, for she was of a stern disposition, and not given to effusion, and I

was always more or less afraid of her, but even now, after so many years have passed, and so many sorrows have overtaken me, her death remains a distinct, sharp, and inconsolable grief, amongst all others. I never feel my loneliness more than when I think of her.

My mother was twenty-three years old when she married my father at Stuttgard, in the private chapel of Queen Olga of Wurtemberg. She was radiantly beautiful, and, like all those whom the gods love, she was carried off young, dying in the full splendour of her youth and of her happiness, five days after my birth. She had passionately longed for a child during the short years of her married life, and when that child was at last given to her, she had to go away there where pain and sorrow are no more, and to leave it to face the world alone. She passed away in full consciousness of her approaching end, with a resignation which can be called heroic, thanking her husband for the years of happiness he had given to her, and reconciled to the will of the Almighty.

My father married again two years after my mother's death, and this created a breach between him and my grandmother. It was then that my aunt, Madame de Balzac, interfered, and began to take the great interest in my education which she always manifested. She was almost the only person who used to speak to me about my mother, and to relate to me anecdotes concerning her. I avoided the subject with my father, and my grandmother was always silent as to her

own sorrows. My aunt was, therefore, the only being with whom I could talk of the beautiful young creature who had died in giving me birth.

One of the first remembrances of my childhood belongs to the Polish Mutiny of 1863. My father was in command of an army corps on the Austrian frontier, and was stationed in a small town called Oustiloug. I don't know to this day why he had his wife and children with him. It was scarcely a spot for ladies and babies to be in, and we were all huddled up together in a horrible little Jewish house, where there was scarcely place to turn in. My little brother died there of convulsions, and as there was no room for me and my nurse in the house, we spent a night or two in a tent which had been hastily erected on the lawn. I can see it well, even now, and the astonishment with which I watched the Cossacks who guarded the place saddle and exercise their horses every morning. It was then I made my first acquaintance with death, and I remember my surprise when I was taken to see my little brother, and could not understand why he was so white and still, and would not look at the flowers I had gathered for him in the fields that same morning. Another fact connected with that event is also impressed upon my mind. The day of the funeral of that small boy (he was two years old) happened to be the one following upon a skirmish between the Russian troops and the insurgents. As the body was being carried to the church, borne, according to custom, on the shoulders of my father and his staff, we met a

party of Cossacks escorting some prisoners. They stopped when they saw the procession, and one of the captives recognising my father, who was known to them all, turned round and began cursing him, saying that his child's death was a punishment of God for his having gone over to the enemy, and drawn his sword in favour of the Russian Czar. One of the Cossacks of the escort, indignant at this piece of brutality, lifted his whip and was going to strike the man on the mouth, when my father raised his voice, and in a sharp, ringing tone ordered him to desist. The Pole was suddenly cowed, and with a brusque movement took off his cap that he had up to that time kept on his head. My father turned round, and after gravely saluting with his sword the long line of prisoners, gave the order for the procession to resume its march.

This incident forms one of the clearest remembrances of my baby days. I was but five years old when it occurred, but I have never been able to forget it. I have often wondered at my father's self-control on this painful occasion; I wondered still more when I learned many and many years later, that he had done his utmost to get the man who had so grossly insulted him at a moment when he could not retaliate, released from the sentence of exile which was inflicted upon him.

This time of the Mutiny must have been a most interesting one. It was followed by a period of repression, the traces of which are not yet effaced. Alexander II. had neither the generosity nor the

fearlessness of his father; he never forgave his Polish subjects their revolt, and allowed the insurrection to be ruthlessly suppressed. In 1831 they hung a few people, sent a few others to Siberia, but no laws of exception were ever promulgated; no children were ever punished for their father's sins. In 1863 things were very different, and the famous reply of the Emperor to the address which was presented to him at Warsaw, '*Messieurs, pas de rêveries,*' is still remembered there. Personally, I have no sympathy with the Polish cause; I am afraid that the Tartar blood which is in me has got the upper hand of the Polish one: or rather that the independence which has always been one of the characteristics of the inhabitants of Little Russia, from whence my father's family originates, constitutes an impassable barrier between myself and Polish aspirations. I cannot understand them, and the way in which religion is used by them for the furtherance of their political animosities is profoundly repugnant to me. I do not understand God being invoked in order to spread one's hatreds and revengeful feelings. I am essentially a Russian in opinions, ideas, affections; I love my country with a passionate devotion, and would not belong to any other.

After the rebellion was suppressed, my father returned to St. Petersburg, and beyond a few trifling incidents I do not remember much of the next two or three years. We made several journeys to Paris to see my aunts, and tremendous undertakings they were at a time when the railway only

extended as far as the German frontier, and when the journey there had to be performed in a travelling carriage, which in appearance resembled nothing so much as a Noah's ark. Neither did railways exist from St. Petersburg to Kieff, in the neighbourhood of which town my father's estates were situated. There was a public road more or less well kept, and upon which the mails used to be carried, and it was a great source of amusement to me when we met a little cart which bore the magic words, 'His Majesty's Post,' and which was, by reason of this appellation, given the preference in the matter of horses. But I do not think I have anything to relate about those years, except one incident which, by reason of the influence it exercised over the future of my country, deserves to be specially mentioned.

It was in St. Petersburg, one April afternoon. We had just finished dinner, my father keeping to the old custom of having that meal at three o'clock, when one of his friends, Admiral Count Heyden, was announced. He took my father aside, and they had a long conversation in one corner of the room, whilst my stepmother looked on with evident surprise, forgetting in her agitation to send me back to my nursery. I could see my father was strangely moved; at last he asked the Count to wait, and went out of the room, returning in a few minutes dressed in full uniform. They drove away together, and then my stepmother called my governess, and they had a hurried conversation, after which she put on her walking things and went out

too. The news brought by Admiral Heyden was that of the attempted assassination of the Emperor by a student called Karakazoff as he was taking his usual afternoon walk with his daughter, the now Dowager Duchess of Coburg, in what is called the Summer Garden, in St. Petersburg.

A chapel now stands at the spot where the dastardly attempt was made, and reminds the public that the long series of crimes of which it was the first, began with that pistol-shot. Up to that moment no one in Russia had even admitted the possibility that the sovereign whose name will for ever remain associated with that great reform of the emancipation of the serfs, could become the object of an attack of the kind. Karakazoff's deed rudely dissipated these illusions, and the discoveries which followed upon his abominable deed shook Russian society to its very depths. Emperors had been murdered before, but the conspiracies against them had always had their origin in, and been confined to, the ranks of the upper classes. A popular manifestation of discontent had never been even dreamt of, and no one had thought for a moment that what are called in Europe the middle classes, could become imbued with revolutionary ideas or opinions, and aspire to play a part in the government of the State. The conspiracy of the 14th of December, 1825, which nearly cost Nicholas I. his throne as well as his life, had been entirely the work of some disappointed noblemen. The nation as a whole had had nothing to do with it. The movement

was headed by a Mourawieff Apostol, a Prince Wolkhonski, and a member of the illustrious house of Troubetskoi. It had not rallied to itself any one belonging to another sphere of society than that of the upper ten. Karakazoff's attempt, on the contrary, was an immense revolt of hitherto untried forces of the nation, against an authority which refused to acknowledge their existence, and which challenged their right to share it with them. It was the real beginning, not so much of nihilism, as of anarchism; and as such it must neither be looked upon as an isolated instance of political fanaticism, nor as the act of a madman. The unfortunate young man who had been led into it, was but the precursor of that other fanatic whose shell destroyed the sovereign his bullet had missed.

The emotion produced by Karakazoff's attempt was immense; it shook the whole nation as I have already said, but it did so in a very different sense than the authorities imagined at first. It familiarised the masses with the idea of regicide, and it stimulated the thinking classes of society—the holders of liberal opinions which had been smouldering for so long, but had never dared to express themselves openly.

We were at that time in the great period of reforms which perhaps failed because they were entered upon too hastily, and without sufficient preparation. It was a kind of revolution Alexander II. had accomplished by a stroke of the pen equal to the one Peter the Great had had the

strength to carry through. The Emperor had neither the energy, nor sufficient political perspicacity to understand that an attempt of the importance of the one he was undertaking required time, patience, and was bound to be accompanied by a few disappointments. He was a curious mixture of autocracy and liberalism. Brought up with immense care, he had become imbued with what were called in Russia at the time Occidental ideas, but at heart he was more authoritative than his father had ever been. Nicholas also had thought of the best way in which the independence of the serfs could be accomplished, but he had understood that a reform of that magnitude could not be rushed; also perhaps that his son not being bound, as he was, with certain traditions, could put his hand to it more easily than would have been possible for himself. But the question had been closely studied, and my father had in his possession several memoirs which had been submitted to the Emperor on that subject, of which he had kept copies. Had the unfortunate Crimean war not interfered, it is probable the matter would have been discussed openly. External complications caused it to be put aside, until the new sovereign took it up almost immediately upon his accession to the throne.

The very mention that such a thing was in contemplation created an amount of enthusiasm such as Russia had never known before. Even the revolutionary party which had its headquarters at Geneva publicly declared its intention of laying

down arms until the result of the young Emperor's venture was known. The excitable Russian masses became quite frantic, and they lived in expectation of a new millennium setting in, as well as of its taking place immediately. They thought that the individual ideas they had assimilated could at once be understood by the bulk of the nation. A wave of excitement shook every man and woman, in the highest as well as in the lowest classes. People enrolled themselves among the ranks of the new set of officials, whom the reforms had suddenly called into existence. Young guardsmen, whose only conception of life to that day had been the enjoyment of the various gaieties of St. Petersburg, declared themselves willing to give them all up, in order to serve upon the Zemstwos or new local councils, for the administration of the different provinces. The introduction of the jury was supposed to give every one the certainty of a fair trial. The sovereign became a kind of half-god, and was deceived into believing that the popularity which he appeared to have attained would be a lasting one.

Alas! for all these hopes! Russians belong to the class of people who cannot wait. When years went on and the reforms so enthusiastically announced dragged themselves out, without bringing any perceptible change in the existing condition of things, people began to grumble. To the latent discontent which had existed for years, and saddened the end of the reign of Nicholas I., succeeded an open revolt. The Emperor was accused of

having promised what he had no intention of granting, and those of his immediate *entourage* who had always opposed the liberal ideas to which he clung so firmly, made use of the disappointment he was not clever enough to conceal, to try and make him go back on the road he had entered upon.

This was the most fatal mistake he could have made, for if it is possible under certain conditions to withhold from a nation liberties it has never known, it is fatal to attempt to deprive it of those which have been already granted to it. Perseverance does not figure among Russian national qualities, and as soon as the first reforms of Alexander II. failed to allay the evils for which they were supposed to have been a remedy, they were pronounced by one section of society to be insufficient, whilst the other declared them to be too wide. Between the two parties by which he was surrounded, neither of which were possessed of sound judgment, the Emperor, whose character was already too much inclined towards hesitation, began to enter upon the path of vacillation, which at last ended by making him a ruler far more autocratic than his father had ever been.

What I say now is of course founded on hearsay, as I was almost a baby in arms, when Russia was started upon the path which now she is bound to follow, no matter where it may lead her to. The subject, however, has got nothing to do with my personal recollections, and I have only touched

upon it in connection with the Karakazoff incident and its subsequent consequences.

In relating the way in which the news of this attempt were brought to my father, I mentioned Admiral Heyden. I must say now a word about this venerable member of St. Petersburg society, who until his death, two years ago, was its most prominent figure by reason of all the historical remembrances which were associated with his name.

He was the last survivor of the battle of Navarino, and the last survivor of the household of the Emperor Nicholas I. When he died he had reached his ninety-seventh or ninety-eighth year, and was up to that day in full possession of his faculties. He had been one of my father's closest friends, and many a kindness did he show to my brother and myself. His own brother was for many years Governor-General of Finland, where he made himself universally liked and esteemed, and whence his departure was accompanied by the keenest regrets.

The two next events which left an impression on my childish mind were the Austrian war and the news of the battle of Sadowa, over which my father got very much excited. He had all along prophesied the defeat of the Austrian troops, but nevertheless did not expect any more than anybody else the crushing reverses which attended the army commanded by General Benedek. He did not care from a political point of view for the aggrandisement of Prussia, and feared it would in the long run bring nothing good for our own country.

Little did I suspect in those days, when my inquisitive little ears were eagerly strained to listen to all the news I could hear, that I was destined to be brought into close contact with the personages whose actions were discussed with such interest by my father and his friends.

In the autumn of that same year, 1866, the heir to our throne was married with great pomp in St. Petersburg to the Princess Dagmar of Denmark. I was taken to see the triumphal entry of the young bride in St. Petersburg; it was the first time I had witnessed a pageant of the kind, and for days and nights I kept thinking about it, and could not sleep for excitement. Rarely has a foreign Princess been greeted with such enthusiasm as the new Grand Duchess, who from the first moment she set foot on the Russian soil, succeeded in winning to herself all hearts. Her smile, the delightful way she had of bowing to the crowds assembled to welcome her, laid immediately the foundations of that popularity which, instead of waning as is often the case, grew day by day, and increased continually as the years went on. The Empress Marie Feodorowna is at present the most popular woman in Russia, and she has made for herself such a name for goodness, kindness, and the most noble qualities of heart and mind, that even among those who have never seen her, she is absolutely worshipped.

In 1867 I was taken to see the Paris Exhibition, but with the exception of a Mexican temple whose different colours somehow impressed me, I do not

remember much about it. The monuments of Paris interested me more than did the world's great fair. The Conciergerie in particular, where I was taken by my father, made me burst into a flood of tears, as we were shown the dungeon where poor Marie Antoinette had been confined, and the courtyard from whence so many unfortunate victims, among whom my own aunt had been included, were dragged to the scaffold.

It was after his journey to Paris that my father definitely gave up his St. Petersburg house and settled in the country, whence he only returned to the capital at the time of the Russo-Turkish war, when he again took a flat in town, where he resided during two or three months every year up to the time of his death. I was growing up, and had little time for anything else but the very severe course of studies to which I was subjected. In summer, 1870, sea baths were prescribed for me, and we went for the season to Odessa. Whilst we were staying there the Franco-German war broke out. At that time, though the Germans were not liked in Russia, yet the remembrance of the Crimean war was still fresh in people's minds, and the strong leanings toward Prussia which, with the solitary exception of the heir to the throne, the whole of the Imperial family entertained, made the public chary in its good wishes for the success of the French arms. The news of the first reverses of the army of Napoleon were therefore rather welcome than otherwise to a Russian's prejudice against that monarch. No one, however, antici-

pated the series of reverses out of which the new German Empire was to rise. It came therefore as a shock when the surrender of Sedan sealed the fate of the second Empire.

We heard about it at Odessa the same evening. We were walking up and down the Boulevard, which is the public promenade there, when General Count Lambert, one of the aides-de-camp of the Emperor, approached my father and asked him whether he had learned the news. As it happened he had not, and his first thought was to rush to the telegraph office and to send a wire to his sisters, after which he began discussing the possible consequences of the great event.

When Paris was invested we spent a sad time, and that winter dragged along very slowly and anxiously in the expectation of news, which every day became worse. Metz surrendered, then came all the other French reverses, and at last the capitulation of Paris, and the armistice, very soon after which, we received the first letters from my aunts which gave us the details of the siege. Madame de Balzac never doubted that an insurrection would be the sequel to that long series of calamities. She wrote to her brother to be prepared for the worst, as nothing short of a miracle could prevent civil war from breaking out.

When the horrors of the Commune were over my father started with us for Paris. When we got there the town was still smoking, so to say. The Tuileries were one mass of blackened ruins, and the Vendôme Column lay upon the

ground, broken into three large fragments. French society was more or less scattered; the Bonapartists, who in spite of everything lived in hopes of a restoration, if not of the Emperor, at least of his son upon the throne, kept themselves outwardly very quiet in the fear of exciting the suspicions of M. Thiers. The Orleans Princes were trying to inaugurate that attitude of *bon bourgeois* which they imagined would be beneficial to their interests, until the time when the natural course of events would put them into possession of the inheritance of the Comte de Chambord. The general public believed that a monarchical restoration was only a matter of time. M. Thiers alone knew what he was doing, and where he was leading the country whose destinies he had been called upon to control. He played his cards admirably, as appears now from the beautiful book in which M. Hanotaux has described the struggle out of which the third Republic was to emerge, probably never to be superseded any more in France by another form of government.

It was during the winter which followed upon the war that I began to feel interested in politics. They were being continually discussed at my aunt's, and one heard nothing else around one but that one subject. I spent all the time when I was not studying at the Hôtel Balzac; and, young as I was, I used to get quite excited at all I used to hear, and to treasure in my memory many remarks I heard around me. I don't know how

it was that they allowed me to be present at conversations which certainly were not intended for a child, but the fact was there, and I owe perhaps to this circumstance many of the tastes to which later on in life I was to cling.

We returned to Russia in the spring of 1873. In the autumn of that same year I became engaged to my husband at the early age of fifteen and a half years, and to this day I am in ignorance how the matter was arranged, but arranged it was between my father and my brother-in-law.

I have often wondered how my father, who loved me so tenderly, could have been a party to such a hurried affair. The only explanation I can find is that he was getting on in years, and wished to see me settled before he died. He had begun at that time to suffer from the heart disease to which he eventually succumbed, which might have had some influence upon the decision he came to. It is also likely that he was tempted by the great position he thought he had secured for me. If my father had any fault it was the pride of birth, and the determination that his daughter should follow in the steps of all his ancestresses, and add to the glory of the great alliances the family had been faithful to, ever since it began to play a part in the history of its country.

No matter what may have been the real reason for my engagement, the fact is that it took place, and as soon as the matter was settled the question arose of my presentation at the Court where it was not intended I should live.

We were in the month of August, the Emperor was expected at Kieff with the Empress, on their way to the Crimea, so I was taken there to be introduced for the first time to my sovereign.

I felt terribly frightened: the more so that the dreaded presentation was to take place at the railway station, in the presence of all the world and his wife. I was arrayed in a white muslin gown which I believe was atrociously made, and, like a lamb about to be slaughtered, was ushered into the Imperial presence.

The first person who met us was old Countess Bloudoff, a favourite lady-in-waiting to the Empress, and a very great friend of my grandmother's. She received me most kindly, and began talking to me of my mother. My fright gradually subsided, and I allowed myself to be soothed into some kind of composure by the dear old lady. We became great friends in later years, and when she died I experienced one of the great sorrows of my life. She was kindness itself, and I shall never forget the help she was to me at that first trying moment of my life when I looked for the first time upon the world in which I was destined to live and play a part.

The sovereigns soon appeared. The Emperor came into the room first, with the grace and dignity which were one of his chief characteristics. Alexander II. at that time had not become cursed with the suspiciousness which embittered the last years of his life, and made him look upon all those he did not know well as natural enemies.

He was the embodiment of courtesy, and his manner was very regal both in speech and appearance. He was a handsome man, holding himself very erect in his uniform, with a countenance which would have been more impressive still, if the eyes had not had a dreamy, almost stealthy look, which seemed to be always wandering. He addressed my father with great affability, and then looking at me said, 'Comme elle rappelle sa mère!'

The Empress, who made her appearance a few moments after her husband, was already suffering from the illness to which she eventually succumbed. She was a slight, graceful woman, with a sweet countenance, but a look of extreme delicacy. I never saw her again, but can remember very well her soft voice, and the low tones in which she spoke. She said a few words to me, but did not show any particular amiability to any one of those who were present, speaking nevertheless to every person in the room. Her daughter, the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrowna, at present Dowager Duchess of Coburg, whose engagement to the Duke of Edinburgh had just been announced, followed her, but kept very much in the background, The whole ceremony lasted only a few minutes. The Imperial couple entered their railway carriage, and the assembly dispersed with, on my part, a feeling of the intensest relief.

This episode of my presentation had a curious sequel. My father, I do not know why, had not communicated to the Emperor the news of my engagement. He heard of it, of course, very soon

afterwards, and caused his trusted Minister of the Household, Count Adlerberg, to write a sharp letter to my father on the subject. I do not think he quite liked the idea of a young heiress, such as I was, being sent out of the country, and though his affection for the Prussian Royal family would have prevented him from forbidding the match, yet as I heard later on, he was anything but pleased with it.

I was married very quietly at the parish church on my father's estate on the 26th of October, 1873. My brother-in-law and two of his sisters came over for the ceremony, which was celebrated in the strictest privacy according to the rites of the Greek Church. My husband and myself left almost immediately afterwards for St. Petersburg, on a visit to my grandmother, whence we went to Berlin, where my new and real life began.

CHAPTER IV.

Berlin after the War—Emperor or King?—The Old Radziwill Palace—Family Parties—The Emperor William's First Love—I meet Von Moltke—My First State Dinner—Am presented to the Empress—The Prince and Princess Charles—The Red Prince—A Court in Mourning—'Un Cadeau de la Reine'—Entertainments at Court—The Beautiful Duchess of Manchester—I dine with the Emperor.

When I arrived in Berlin in November, 1873, the German Empire was quite a new thing, and the Court as well as society were still what they had been when no thought of future grandeur had entered their minds. The Emperor was mostly called the King, and indeed he never called himself anything else. There was even to be observed a certain regret, on the part of the old Prussian aristocracy, at the merging of their old Kingdom into the new Empire. They keenly regretted the traditions which appeared to them to be inseparable from the Prussian Eagle, and which were not yet incorporated into the Imperial Crown. People were still dazzled by the extraordinary series of military successes which had suddenly raised their country from a small State to the greatest monarchy in Europe. Nothing seemed settled yet, and even in Court ceremonies an uncertainty, as it were, prevailed. One never knew

whether to address the sovereign as Emperor or King. He himself clung with a tenacity which lasted up to his death to the old title, whilst the Empress Augusta, and especially the Crown Prince, were very punctilious as to the observance of the new one. I remember a curious instance of this slight difference of opinions. One evening during a ball given by General von Kameke, the then War Minister, the Emperor approached me, and talking about the weather (it was early in March), remarked how mild it was for that time of the year, adding that the 'Queen' had brought him that morning some violets which she had plucked in the garden of the Palace. The Crown Prince happened to be standing near, and he remarked instantly: 'Yes, the Empress told me about them,' to which his father retorted, 'When did you see the Queen?'

At that time, which seems to me so far away that I can hardly believe I lived through it, for so many events have crowded themselves in the past thirty years, my husband's family was a very numerous one. They all lived together in the old Radziwill Palace, since bought by the State, which had been left in the same condition it was in at the time my husband's grandmother, the Princess Louise of Prussia, for whom it had been bought, had inhabited it. My mother-in-law occupied one half of the State apartments, whilst her sister, who had married my father-in-law's brother, lived in the other half. The other members of the family were crowded in all parts of

the house, all of them more or less uncomfortably, but with no idea of leaving the roof which seemed destined to harbour them up to the time of their death. For my part, I found an apartment prepared for me in what anywhere else would have been called the garret, but which rejoiced in the name of *appartement aux fenêtres en mansarde.* We used to dine at the unearthly hour of five o'clock with my mother-in-law, her two unmarried daughters, and her second son. After the meal we were expected to retire into our rooms and to reassemble again at half-past nine, alternatively at my mother-in-law's and at her sister's, where we spent the rest of the evening until the stroke of eleven released us. Tea was served at a large round table, and the ladies of the family sat at another, knitting or working. I cannot say that the conversation was lively; it mostly ran upon the doings of the Court, the health of the Royal family, and other subjects of the like importance. My sister-in-law, a Frenchwoman by birth, Mademoiselle de Castellane, who had all the wit of her family and of her nation, generally did all she could to bring a spark of gaiety into these solemn gatherings, but I cannot say that she was very successful. Even the presence of strangers did not break the stiffness of these wearisome evenings. The visitors, for the most part, were old friends of my father-in-law's, and Poles of note who happened to be in Berlin, with some members of the most exclusive and aristocratic families of Prussia, and the leaders of

the Roman Catholic party in the country and in both houses of the Prussian Parliament. Sometimes, oftener than was pleasant for the comfort of the younger members of the family, the Empress —and when she was in Berlin her daughter, the Grand Duchess of Baden — used to put in an appearance quite unexpectedly, when there was a general flight among the male portion of the inhabitants of the house. This kind of thing used to take place during the winter season, when the Court was in the capital, about twice a month; and about as many times weekly, if not oftener, some of us were invited to spend the evening at the Palace, in what was called the 'Queen's bonbonnière,' about which evenings I shall have more to say later on.

The Radziwill family, at the time of my marriage, was composed of my mother-in-law, her children, and her sister with *her* children. My mother-in-law, by birth an Austrian, belonging to the illustrious House of Clary Aldringen, was one of the kindest women alive, if not gifted with an over-amount of intelligence. To me she showed herself the best of friends, if sometimes tantalising, and I can only speak of her with affection and respect. Hers had been the life of the virtuous woman of which speaks the Scriptures. She had borne nine children, out of whom she lost five, all grown up, and, with one exception, all of consumption. Her married life, though admirably well-conducted, had I suspect been far from happy. My father-in-law, who had died during

the French war, and whom I had never known, was—if one is to believe the accounts that are given of him—a most tyrannical, overbearing, and unbearable personage. He ruled his family with an iron hand, and controlled every one of their actions as well as every detail connected with the immense household of the Radziwill Palace. Neither his wife nor his children were allowed to say one word, or to do the slightest thing he did not approve of. His wife had been absolutely cowed by his iron, inflexible will, until she seemed to have lost every desire to attain individuality of any kind. He held the opinion that women had to be kept in the background, and not allowed to express an interest in anything else but dress, children, and gossip. His influence reigned supreme in his family for years after his death, and I think it was only when the old house, in which he had been born and died, had been sold, that they began to realise it was time for them to begin to live an independent existence.

My father-in-law's mother had been a Princess of Prussia, the niece of Frederick the Great, and this introduction of a Royal Highness in the family had given it a quasi-Royal rank, which began to be contested only when the favourite Master of the Ceremonies of the Empress Augusta elaborated the new rules for precedence for the German Empire. Princess Louise of Prussia, who became the wife of Prince Anthony Radziwill, had been the intimate friend of the unfortunate Queen

of the same name, whom she had accompanied during her flight at Memel. Her son, my father-in-law, had been born three days before the little Prince who was destined in the course of events to wear the Imperial Crown of a united Germany; they were brought up together, and nothing in after life ever disturbed their friendship, which was further increased by the passionate love which Prince William of Prussia, as he was called at that time, conceived for the beautiful Elisa Radziwill, my father-in-law's sister. So much has been written about that romance that I feel constrained to correct the story. It is asserted that my aunt died of a broken heart, after King Frederick William III. refused his consent to her marriage with his second son. People have extolled the sacrifice the unhappy young lady was called upon to make, and transformed her into a victim of State reasons. In reality things were very different. The only victim in this romance was Prince William, who was passionately fond of his cousin, whilst she was more sensible to the material advantages of a union with him, than to the deep affection she had inspired him with. When her marriage had been definitely broken off, she very soon consoled herself, and at the time of her death, which was due to pulmonary consumption, she was actually engaged to an Austrian nobleman, which proves that it did not take her very long to heal her broken heart. The Prince, however, always remained true and faithful to the love of his youth, and Elisa Radziwill's portrait adorned

the writing table of the old Emperor up to his death, whilst the remembrance of his love for her made him look upon her family with eyes different from those with which he looked upon the rest of the world.

To return to my father-in-law: he had not been liked in his family, and, for my part, I was very thankful to have been spared an acquaintance with him. But I found his influence still reigning in the house, and the sort of daily routine he had established was observed as regularly as if he had still been there to see that it was carried out.

My husband had at the time of my marriage three sisters and two brothers, the elder of whom was one of the favourite aides-de-camp of the old Emperor, and the one who conveyed to Benedetti at Ems the message which had for consequence the Franco-German War. His wife is one of the persons I respect most in the world, and certainly one of the few really remarkable women in Europe. Her intelligence recalls that of her great-uncle, the famous Talleyrand; and, added to this, she has a very warm heart, is a true friend, a generous character, and is possessed of the noblest qualities which can adorn a woman, who has also known many sorrows and disappointments in life, and who has borne them with a smiling face. My sister-in-law is one of the most influential persons in Berlin; her salon is a social power, and has been such for a long number of years. During the lifetime of the Empress Augusta she had quite a unique position, and, one can say so

now, exercised over the old lady an influence that no one has ever shared with her, and which, I think, I can safely say she never used to harm any one, not even those whom she had reason to dislike. I do not know whether I shall ever see my sister-in-law again, but if this book should fall into her hands, I hope she will see in it the great esteem in which I hold her, as well as my gratitude for innumerable kindnesses I have experienced at her hands.

This said, I will dispose briefly of the other members of my husband's family. My other brother-in-law has played too small a part to deserve notice; as for his sisters, one died in childbirth in 1877; another succumbed to illness at Cairo in 1876—she was the one with whom I was most intimate; and the eldest one married Prince Hugo Windisch Graetz.

We reached Berlin, with my husband, one very wet November evening, and were received in the great hall of the Radziwill Palace by my mother-in-law and the whole of her family. It was a Saturday, if I remember well, and one of the first things I was told, almost before any greetings had been exchanged, was that three days later my brother-in-law was giving a very large dinner in my honour. To say I was dismayed would be using a feeble expression. I was a mere child, and felt too frightened for words. I would have infinitely preferred to have been given some weeks to get used to my new life and surroundings. But, of course, I could not say anything, and so a few

days later saw me launched into the midst of Berlin society.

I shall never forget that dinner. I had never seen anything like it, nor attended any function in the least resembling it. Taken straight out of the schoolroom into the great world, I felt as if I should never get used it. Certainly I never suspected that the day would come when I should enjoy it.

All the old friends of the Radziwill family were present at the dinner, foremost among them the celebrated Field-Marshal von Moltke, who had been in long bygone days chief of the staff of my father-in-law at the time the latter had been in command of an army corps at Magdeburg, and who had remained on intimate terms with him to the last. He was the personage whom I was most curious to see. My father had specially commissioned me to tell him my impressions about the great warrior, so I tried to subdue my fright, and to attempt a conversation with him, when, with a wonderful condescension, he came and sat by me, and began a talk which could by no means have been amusing to him. He spoke French very well indeed, which put me at my ease, for at that time I did not understand one word of German, and I believe he tried to make himself pleasant, as pleasant as he could. It seems, as I learned later, that my face reminded him of his dead wife's, and whether this was true or not I cannot tell, but certainly, so long as I lived in Berlin, the illustrious soldier was always most kind to me, and,

though he had the justly deserved reputation of being silent, yet he never missed an opportunity, when we met, of saying a few kind words to me.

I do not remember very well now who were the other guests at the dinner. I know that long speeches were made, which, I suppose, were a welcome to the bride, as well as allusions to the virtues of the family she had entered into, for all the women put their pocket-handkerchiefs to their eyes, and my mother-in-law wept quite loudly. As I did not understand one word of what was being said, I suppose I produced upon the assembly the impression of being a most callous person.

A few days after this *début* into society the Court returned to Berlin from Baden-Baden, and the question of my presentation was at once mooted. My mother-in-law wrote to the Empress, and the very next day was told to bring me with her, to be introduced.

I must confess my heart was beating, and I hated the whole procedure. Apart from everything else, I was afraid the Empress would address me in German, when I felt that the last remnants of my composure would surely give way. However, there was nothing to be done, and I had to make up my mind to face the ordeal. It was a cold morning, the snow covered the ground, and I remember thinking what a terrible thing it was to be dressed *en toilette de cérémonie* at the early hour of eleven o'clock. I donned one of my trousseau gowns, and we started. My sister-in-law had also been told to

come, and I felt her presence would be a comfort, as probably French would be spoken, her German being also rather indifferent. I was not mistaken in this hope.

We arrived at the palace at the appointed hour, and were at once shown into a large room, called *le salon blanc*, which preceded the one in which the Empress generally gave her audiences. It was in later years to become almost as familiar to me as my own rooms.

The palace, which was occupied by the old King, was a most unpretentious building, very shabbily furnished, and which could have been taken for a private house, so simple and modest it was. I had been expecting magnificence, such as I knew was met with at the Russian Court, and was slightly disappointed: a feeling, which, however, gave place to amazement when we were shown, after a few moments' waiting, into the presence of the sovereign.

At the time I write about the Empress Augusta had reached the mature age of sixty-one years, and certainly gave one the impression of being older than that, perhaps on account of the very juvenile manner in which she was dressed. A gown of pale cream, very elaborately trimmed, slightly open at the neck, where it displayed a magnificent pearl necklace, seemed to my inexperienced eyes to be rather out of place at that early hour of the day. She wore a wig, composed of innumerable curls, the colour of which would have been sufficient to cast doubts as to its genuineness. It

was surmounted by an erection of lace and pink ribbons, which must have had pretensions to be called a cap, but which did not bear much resemblance to the article. That strange get-up did not produce a favourable impression, but certainly nothing could be kinder than the welcome I received, and I felt it was most ungrateful on my part not to be more thankful; but the Empress, as is well known, was not a sympathetic person, and the extreme affectation, which was her chief characteristic, did her an immense amount of harm. Her voice was not pleasant, and the peculiar manner in which she moved her hands jarred upon one's nerves. She kissed me, and at once began speaking to me of the virtues of the family which had become my own, prophesying all kinds of nice things for my future. I listened to her without, of course, daring to open my mouth, but in silent wonder, not at what she said, but at her manners, and the sound of her voice. She talked to me for about a quarter of an hour exactly as if she had been repeating a lesson learned by heart beforehand, then, addressing my sister-in-law, at once plunged into other subjects, and discussed, among others, the marriage of the young Duke of Hamilton, whose betrothal to Lady Mary Montague, the daughter of the Duchess of Manchester, as she was called at that time, had just been made public. We were soon after this dismissed, the Empress doing so by getting up and making us a little courtesy, than which nothing could have been more graceful or more dignified.

PRINCESS CHARLES OF PRUSSIA

The day which followed my presentation to the Queen I was introduced to her elder sister, Princess Charles of Prussia.

Princess Charles was a very different person from the Empress. Just as affected in her way, she was yet far more sympathetic and certainly a great deal more liked. Had she not, like her sister, persisted in trying to appear young, she would have been quite charming. One thing is certain, she had none of that love for intrigue which was one of the principal characteristics of the Empress, and she had an amount of tact the latter never possessed. The two ladies were not supposed to be inordinately fond of each other. People said that Princess Charles did not quite relish having to give up precedence to her younger sister, and that she secretly envied her the Imperial Crown which had descended upon her head. I do not know, of course, how far this assertion was true, but it did not require a very astute observer to notice that relations between the two sisters were more formal than tender.

Prince Charles himself was in his way just as fascinating a man as his brother, the Emperor. He represented one of the best types of an eighteenth-century grand seigneur, and his manner to women was quite perfection; neither too much nor too little, but gallant with just a shade of reticence, which suggested that had he been in another position he would have hastened to lay the devotion of his whole heart at the feet of every woman to whom he was speaking. He was im-

mensely popular in society, and the receptions which were held at the palace on the Wilhelm Platz were far more appreciated than those of the Empress Augusta.

Prince and Princess Charles of Prussia had an only son, the celebrated Red Prince. This formidable personage, in spite of his brilliant military talents, had never known how to make himself popular in society. His manners were brusque, and rumour attributed to him many most unsympathetic qualities, one of which showed itself in his treatment of his wife.

This unfortunate lady, by birth a Princess of Anhalt, was one of the most charming as well as one of the most lovely women of her time. Gifted with the rarest qualities of heart and mind as well as with extraordinary talent both for music and painting, she had led the saddest of lives ever since the day when she was led to the altar by the Red Prince. Being unfortunately very deaf, this infirmity had helped to make her reticent and shy of the world. But her kindness was genuine, and whenever she had an opportunity she helped other people, and was always ready to advise or comfort them in their sorrows. Personally I shall never forget her goodness or the sympathy I invariably met at her hands all through the long years during which I lived in Berlin.

Prince and Princess Frederick Charles occupied a suite of rooms in the old castle in Berlin, and the first time I was taken to the Princess, in order to be introduced to her, we found her surrounded

with her three daughters, the two eldest of whom were just beginning to go out into society, and equalled their mother in loveliness, whilst the third, young Princess Margaret, now Duchess of Connaught, was still in short frocks, and not out of the schoolroom.

Leaving aside the Crown Prince and Crown Princess, of whom I shall speak later on, the Royal family comprised, in addition to the persons I have named, the son of the Emperor's youngest brother, Prince Albert, now Regent of Brunswick; his wife, a Princess of Saxe-Altenburg, and his sister, Princess Alexandrine, whose quarrels with her husband, Prince William of Mecklenburg, were at regular intervals coming up before the public. The two daughters of Prince and Princess Charles of Prussia were rarely, if ever, seen in Berlin, and two cousins of the Emperor, Prince Alexander and Prince George, both unmarried and both more or less eccentric, had no influence whatever in society. Prince Augustus of Wurtemburg, in command of the Corps of the Guards, and brother of the Grand Duchess Helen of Russia was living in Berlin, and going about very much, being a general favourite in society. Prince Frederic of Hohenzollern was not married yet, and did not count for much among the Royalties, as he lived quite like a private person.

The Queen Dowager, widow of King Frederick William IV., fell seriously ill at Dresden, where she had been staying with her sister, the Queen of Saxony, about the time I married. She died

early in November, and to my intense dismay I found myself obliged to put aside all my pretty trousseau dresses, and to smother myself in crape, for a person I had never seen. Court mourning was not a joke at Berlin at that time, whatever it may be now. Whenever the notice of it appeared the whole of society covered itself with garments of woe, and every kind of gaiety was instantly put a stop to. Queen Elizabeth, having been a reigning sovereign, the mourning for her was as severe as it could well be, and consisted of long black cashmere dresses, a kind of Mary Stuart cap of black crape, and two veils, one falling over the face, and the other trailing behind to the very ground; the last-mentioned had to be worn indoors, and I remember my mother-in-law insisting on our decking ourselves with it every evening for dinner, in anticipation of a possible visit from the Empress, which event did actually occur two or three times during the period when these trappings of woe were prescribed. In Russia black is never worn on holidays, but in Germany it is different, and even on New Year's Day we went and offered our good wishes to the Emperor and Empress in our crape dresses and veils, and anything more gloomy I am sure I have never seen, either before or after that, in the whole of my life.

The first Christmas that followed upon my marriage was thus spent in all the gloom of black clothes. On the 26th of December, the Empress appeared at my mother-in-law's, accompanied by

her daughter, the Grand Duchess of Baden, and brought with her an enormous bag filled with various trifles which she distributed among us as Christmas presents. These occasions were dreaded by everybody, as anything more hideous than the knick-knacks the poor Empress used to bring could hardly be imagined. My husband, with his cousins, had composed on the subject a little song of which the refrain was:—

'Un vilain, vilain, vilain cadeau de la Reine;
Un vilain, vilain cadeau de la Reine.'

The fact was that she never gave a pretty thing, and on this particular Christmas, the first in my experience when I was admitted among the recipients of her bounty, I remember having been scared by the sight of an appalling thermometer in green bronze representing the Column of Victory in Berlin, which in itself is a hideous monument. As my ill luck would have it, I was made the unhappy recipient of this monstrosity, and never could get rid of it in after life. No matter where I moved, the dreadful thing followed me. It would not get broken, or lost, or even mislaid; it was impossible to give it to a bazaar, and I expect that one day it will turn up again from one of my boxes, when I least expect it.

These presents of the Queen remind me of an adventure which befell one of them, and caused my poor mother-in-law a few sleepless nights. She had received for a birthday present from the Empress a table in white china ornamented by

her Majesty herself with paintings of the kind called Decalcomanie. It was anything but beautiful, and was at once relegated to a dark corner of the apartment, whence it only emerged when the good Augusta was expected. This kind of thing lasted for about two years, when at last my mother-in-law thought she might venture to dispose of the ugly thing, and gave it to a bazaar held in her own house. She carefully waited until the Empress had paid it a visit, and then, feeling sure of impunity, sent it there. As it happened the Emperor appeared the next day, and after having been taken round the rooms was at once caught by the unfortunate table, and in spite of frantic efforts made by my sister-in-law to prevent him, proceeded to buy it as a present for the Empress. One may imagine the consternation! However, Augusta, if she recognised her own present, showed herself merciful, for she made no allusion to its fate.

No one could accuse the Court of Berlin of inhospitality. Both the sovereigns liked to entertain, and it was rarely that an evening went by without some person being invited to spend the evening at the palace. These daily Soirées were called 'les soirées de la Bonbonnière' from the room in which they were held, which formed part of the apartment of the Grand Duchess of Baden, the Emperor's daughter. There were rarely more than five or six people invited. The Empress used to preside at one round table, whilst the Emperor, who usually appeared a little late, sat at the other.

Tea, cakes, ices (always of the same kind), and roasted chestnuts, which were most difficult to eat on account of the gloves it was against etiquette to take off, were handed round in turns. Her Majesty, who usually worked at some kind of embroidery, directed the conversation in the channel she liked best, and it always took place in French. Any new book was discussed as well as the current reviews, and not a little gossip took place before the King appeared. As it was nearly always the same people who met at these entertainments, one was pretty sure what was going to be related or said before even one entered the room. It would be a stretch of politeness to say these evenings were not dull, though they gave those who were invited to them the opportunity of hearing a great many things they would otherwise have known nothing about. It was in the Bonbonnière that the old Emperor once discussed the Berlin Congress with me, the only time I ever talked politics with him, of which conversation I shall speak later on.

Apart from these small gatherings, there were about three or four Court balls during the season, one of which took place in the small palace which the Emperor occupied, whilst the others were given in the old castle. These were very grand affairs, and comprised all the world and his wife, so far as they were of a rank justifying an invitation being extended to them. The last one of the Carnival took place on Shrove Tuesday, and marked the end of the dancing season, for at the time I was married, no one would have thought

of giving or attending a ball in Lent, as it was well known that the Empress had strong Roman Catholic leanings. Courting her displeasure was more than many would have dared, as it practically meant exclusion from the Court festivities, and, after all, entertainments in the White Hall of the Old Castle, as it was called, were not to be despised. They were really on a grand scale, and certainly the sight of the Imperial *cortège* entering the ballroom constituted one of the finest spectacles in the world. At the present day they say the White Hall has been modernised and improved, but, at the time I am speaking of, it was already a fine apartment. There were galleries upstairs from whence one could watch the movements of the guests, and which constituted an excellent place of retirement for those who were tired, or weary with the crowd, and the necessity of standing through the whole evening. In the ballroom itself, a daïs was erected at one end for the Royal family, on the left of which the Corps Diplomatique was grouped, whilst the right side was reserved for the ladies of princely families, having the title of Serene Highness or Durchlaucht. Opposite the throne were the other ladies, with those who rejoiced in the appellation of 'Excellency' at their head. The ball was generally opened by a waltz, of which the first pair were the maid of honour and the aide-de-camp on duty, followed by one of the young Princesses of the Royal family, and the cavalier she had honoured with an invitation. This was suc-

ceeded by a solemn quadrille in which the Crown Prince and Princess generally took part, after which the stiffness of the evening gave way to more or less general enjoyment.

At about midnight supper was announced, and the company distributed itself in strict order of precedence into different rooms. At the door of each, a chamberlain was stationed to prevent intruders from invading those which they were not allowed to enter. This supper was always more or less of a crush, but I have never seen enacted the scenes of confusion which take place at large Court balls in St. Petersburg.

Popular as these entertainments were, invitations to them were not half so eagerly sought after as those to the small ball which once a year took place at the Emperor's own palace. To be asked to it was the ambition of every woman in Berlin society, for the fact of having been invited to that *fête* placed at once the lucky being, who had been thus honoured, among, not the upper ten thousand, but among the upper thousand in Germany. Ladies kept their prettiest gowns for that day, and at the beginning of each season it was always a matter of anxiety to mothers of *débutantes* to know whether their daughters were going to be admitted to the charmed circle of those who were to enjoy the personal hospitality of the sovereign or not. In reality these dances, for, from the limited number of guests one could hardly call them anything else, differed in no way from entertainments given by private people.

Nothing could be plainer than their scale, but the great charm of them consisted in the kind way in which the Royal hosts received their guests and bade them welcome. It was on these occasions that the proverbial amiability of the old Emperor was seen to its fullest advantage, and it was at them he displayed the gallantry which had made of him in his youth one of the most fascinating personages in Europe.

Apart from balls the winter season in Berlin was ushered in generally by a large dinner offered by the King and Queen to the Foreign Ambassadors, and afterwards by a Drawing-room, or Court, as it was called, which enabled all the different classes of society to offer their homage to the sovereigns. When I arrived in Germany, it consisted in the guests being stationed in the different rooms of the castle, and the Emperor and Empress walking through them on their way to the White Hall where a concert took place; but later on, when the Empress became too infirm for this kind of promenade, it was replaced by her taking her seat on the throne, whilst her guests passed before her in quick succession. This ceremony generally began at eight o'clock, which necessitated an early dinner, and the pleasure of getting at an unearthly hour into a Court train, tiara, and feathers.

No invitations were sent out for these Courts, but all those who were comprised in what was called Court society made it a point to attend them, as it was generally supposed that when this

was omitted, one's name was struck off the list of Court balls. Members of Parliament appeared on these occasions, as well as representatives of the merchant classes, and the Municipality of Berlin and Potsdam, and it was at one of these entertainments that the Emperor lost his temper with a member of the Reichstag, who had on some important military measure voted against the Government, and forgot himself so far, as to tell him he had no business to appear before his sovereign, after the animosity he had displayed against his politics.

Such incidents were not frequent in the life of the Emperor William I., but when they did happen, they of course produced an immense surprise, more so indeed than they deserved, for in spite of all his gentleness and genuine amiability, the old Kaiser was at heart a furious autocrat, and did not brook contradiction even to the smallest extent.

Both the Emperor and Empress attended balls and entertainments at the Foreign Embassies, and at the principal families of the Berlin aristocracy, such as the Dukes of Uyest and Ratibor, Prince Pless, &c. Ministers were also honoured by the Royal presence at their festivities, when they gave any, and every Thursday during Lent, concerts were held at the palace, which went under the appellation of the Empress's Thursdays, and to which the whole of the Royal family, Ambassadors and their wives (once a fortnight), and the rest of society, with the exception of a small circle

which were honoured with a weekly command, were asked in turns, one person after another. Nothing could well have been duller. Every guest on arriving was assigned his or her place at the table of a member of the Royal family, and there one stuck for the whole of the evening, which began with a long circle, followed by a still longer concert, at which the same artists were heard year after year; then supper was eaten at the same tables one had sat at the whole evening. This supper was served on the red velvet table-cloths, with which the tables were covered, and consisted invariably of the same menu, salmon with mayonnaise sauce, cold chicken and ices. Princess Frederick Charles, always witty, used to say that a barrel of that sauce was made at the beginning of each season, and had to do its whole length. She used to beguile the tediousness of the evening by drawing some of the funniest and cleverest caricatures I have ever seen in my life.

It was at one of these concerts I saw, for the first time, the present Duchess of Devonshire, then Duchess of Manchester, in the zenith of her marvellous beauty. She used to come to Berlin every spring to visit her father, Count von Alten, and her sisters, and was always made much of at Court. I remember well the day when I was introduced to her, and how she struck me as the loveliest creature I had ever set my eyes upon. Indeed, I have only met in my whole existence three women who could be compared to her: they are the present Duchess of Sermoneta, Countess de

Villeneuve, and a Russian lady, Madame Kitty Tolstoy. The Duchess d'Ossuna, later Duchess de Croy, though a beautiful creature, could not be compared to them, especially to Madame de Villeneuve, who, dying as she did, in the full possession of her loveliness, did not let her worshippers see the change that years are bound to bring along with them.

It was also at these Thursdays that I met the present Countess von Bulow, the wife of the German Chancellor, when she was still Countess Donhoff, and a great friend of the Crown Princess of Germany. Fascinating as few beings can be, gifted with the rarest qualities of mind, reminding one of her distinguished mother, Donna Laura Minghetti, Madame von Bulow, from the first moment she appeared at the German Court, became one of its most shining lights, and though at that time no one could have guessed the future which lay in store for her, nor the romance which was to unite her life with one of the cleverest men in Europe, hers was a personality which could not pass unnoticed. She commanded sympathy and admiration from the first moment one set one's eyes upon her.

Easter generally put an end to the Berlin season. The Empress left for Coblenz on the Rhine, or Baden-Baden; and the Emperor, kept in town by military reviews and exercises, made use of the liberty left to him by the absence of his wife, to go about dining with his numerous friends. June generally saw him on his way to

Ems, and in August both he and the Empress returned to Potsdam, where they spent a month before proceeding on their autumn journeys, and where they entertained largely the few people whose sad fate had condemned them to spend the summer in the capital.

I remember well the first time I dined at Babelsberg, as the residence of the sovereign was called; it was on the 18th of August, 1875, the anniversary of the battle of Gravelotte. I sat at the right of the Emperor, and next to me was Colonel Lestock, who had been in command of the first regiment of the Guards on that fateful day. When champagne was handed round, the old King got up, and, raising his glass, spoke a few words in honour of the day, and with accents I have never forgotten, nor ever will forget, expressed his gratitude to his faithful army for the devotion to duty and the courage it had displayed five years before. Tears were not only in his voice, but actually rolled down his cheeks, when he mentioned his dead mother, who had suffered so much at the hands of the Corsican adventurer, and when he had finished he held out his hand to Colonel Lestock, saying, as he did so, 'I thank you and my faithful regiment of the First Foot Guards.' Lestock kissed the sovereign's hand, and, raising his glass in turn, called for three cheers for the King. The scene, in its simplicity, had a grandeur which was very impressive. It printed itself on my youthful imagination of seventeen, and made me realise for the first time, perhaps, how terrible

and earnest had been the struggle which had resulted in the destruction of one Empire and the creation of another. The spectacle of that old man mentioning his mother's name, and expressing his gratitude to his faithful troops for having avenged her, and wiped away the insults she had been obliged to submit to, made me understand the energy and the courage with which he had faced the task which had been laid before him. His simple words moved his listeners, and gave them an insight into his real character, more than a thousand long speeches would have done.

CHAPTER V.

The Real Emperor William I.—His Tact and Unselfishness as a Man—His Rapacity as a Sovereign—Relations with Bismarck—The Crown Prince Frederick contrasted with his Father—His Pride in the Empire—His Scruples—His Sympathy with Me in my first Great Sorrow.

I HAD been already settled three months in Berlin, when I was for the first time introduced to the Emperor. He had been ill and confined to his room for a long time, so that, though I was frequently asked to the small *soirées* of the Empress, I had never seen her Royal Consort. When Queen Elizabeth died the Court mourning prevented any festivities, so it was about Christmas I met at last the old monarch. It was at a concert at the palace. He sent for me, or, rather, asked my husband to bring me over to him, when he addressed me with the kindness which made him such an attractive personality to all those who approached him. As time went on, and I knew the Emperor more closely, my admiration for him increased every day, and now, after so many years, I cannot help thinking with affection and gratitude of all the various kindnesses I experienced at his hands. He was certainly one of the remarkable monarchs of the century, and with abilities which did not rank above the average, he contrived, only through his sense of duty, to achieve far greater results than

even Frederick the Great, with all his genius, had performed. William I.'s greatest quality was an absolute unselfishness. Whenever the interests of his beloved country required it, he was always ready to forget his personal feelings, or to sacrifice his personal preferences. He was by nature a soldier, with all the soldier's blind obedience, and with the soldier's respect for authority, which in his case was represented by God alone. He had the deep sense of the duties he knew he was born to fulfil, and was absolutely convinced of the reality of what to him appeared to be his mission upon earth. He was imbued with a sense of obligation to the Creator, and though always ready to forget himself never allowed others not to remember that he was their sovereign. But he performed this with such consummate tact that even when he asserted his dignity, those towards whom he did so could only admire him for it. I will give a personal example of what I mean by these words.

One night at a ball given by the Prince and Princess Charles of Prussia, I had remained in the supper room a little later than the other guests, talking to one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, Count Goltz. William I. saw us, and began chaffing me about what he called my flirtation. Count Goltz at that time was far advanced in the sixties, and so it could hardly be called dangerous. The Emperor was fond of a little joke, and amused himself in teasing me, ending with a more or less long conversation. Count Goltz made his escape, and people having gradually left the room, I

remained alone with the Emperor. He suddenly noticed this, and laughingly said, 'We had better go back, or else your husband will be getting jealous.' He then offered me his arm, and led me back to the ballroom. Arrived at the door, he suddenly dropped my arm, in the kindest possible manner, with a joking remark of some kind, and as I made him a curtsey, he drew himself up and entered the room alone, whilst I followed him a few paces behind, but he never left off talking to me the whole time. Of course, it would have been highly improper for the German Emperor to enter any room, even on a private occasion, let alone an official one, as this was, having on his arm a little girl like myself (I was about seventeen at the time), but I doubt whether many people would have been found who could have done what he did in the same kind way.

I have mentioned this little episode because it will help, perhaps, the reader to form a true opinion of the character of the first German Emperor as applied to private life. He united the just pride of the ruler to the affability of a father, and it was impossible to be brought into contact with him without feeling attracted by his genuine qualities. I am speaking now of his private life, and judging him in his private capacity. If we look at him from the public point of view, my appreciation will perhaps be different from those who have not known him so well as I have done. It may be that as a Russian I am not quite fair towards him, but it is impossible to have lived during the Russo-

Turkish War of 1877-78 and not to have felt some kind of resentment at the way Germany, forgetting what Russia had done for her a few short years before, had played into Lord Beaconsfield's hands. The Congress of Berlin is a page of Russian history which ought to be erased as soon as possible, if Russia is to keep up her prestige in the East. Events have already justified the conduct of Count Ignatiev, and the statesmanlike insight with which he had judged the situation, when at San Stefano he had signed the treaty England was to tear up, and Germany, forgetful of her obligations to the Power who had allowed her to crush poor France in 1870, had not insisted upon being respected.

I do not think, however, that the Berlin Congress would have turned out as it did, if the old Emperor had been at the head of the Government at the time of its deliberations. But he was lying on a sick bed struck by the murderous hand of Nobiling, and the Crown Prince, who was Regent in his place, was too sincere an enemy of Russian politics to interfere in any way with the plans and decisions of Prince Bismarck; so that after all England had it her own way, and was the only Power who profited by the tremendous sacrifices Russia imposed upon herself in the struggle which restored to Bulgaria her independence. The Emperor William had a latent conviction that Germany had not performed to advantage the part which was expected of her, and the only time he ever talked politics to me, one evening in the 'Bonbonnière,' he told me that he would

have preferred a smaller Bulgaria placed more directly under Russian influence, and that he had been horrified at the emancipation of Jews in Roumania. He added in a resentful tone that he had not been consulted at all during the Congress, and that the Crown Prince had had it all his own way, adding that 'Prince Bismarck thought it was for the best.' I have often wondered since how this conversation came about, especially that (I repeat it once more) it was not the Emperor's custom to talk politics with ladies. However, the conversation took place, and was more or less a one-sided affair, because, as the reader may well imagine, I only listened, and never ventured to open my mouth.

To come back to the Emperor as a sovereign, I do not think in spite of Prince Bismarck's memoirs, or of the Crown Prince's diary, that the public at large has realised the extent of his ambition. He was, without doubt, covetous of his neighbours' possessions, and the Chancellor had the greatest trouble in the world, to get him to consent to the conclusion of peace with Austria, after the decisive battle of Sadowa, or to persuade him it would be impolitic to annex the whole of the kingdom of Saxony. He could not understand that material victory did not carry with it the assimilation of the nation which had been vanquished. It was the same in 1870, and during the negotiations which had for immediate result the foundation of the present German Empire. The idea did not appeal to the Emperor, who in

his inmost heart would have preferred to be a great King of Prussia instead of the first ruler of an Empire in which he was not the one and only authority. If Bavaria, Würtemberg, and the different minor States of South Germany could have been swept away, as was the kingdom of Hanover in 1866, he would have been delighted to cover himself with the purple of the Cæsars, but it jarred upon his nerves to find he had, if only in appearance, to share his authority with other monarchs whom he secretly despised. In this particular the Crown Prince resembled his father, though in a different way, as I shall show presently when I describe him.

It has commonly been said and believed that the old Emperor did not give much of his attention to politics, and that he was content to let the Chancellor rule as he liked. This is far from true, as the correspondence published the other day will have proved. The Emperor liked to be consulted upon every point, and very often he absolutely refused to accept the opinion of Bismarck. He considered the army as his particular department, and in any case where it was concerned, it was the all-powerful Minister that had to give in to William I., whose eminent quality was an almost infallible sense of the fitness of certain people for certain places. Without being brilliant, his common sense was nearly akin to genius, and in questions which he believed to be vital to the welfare of Prussia he put aside likes or dislikes, and did the right thing at the right moment.

This explains how no intrigue, no effort, even those made by his wife and son, ever succeeded in shaking the position of Prince Bismarck. Once, it was in 1875 I think, the dismissal of the Chancellor was accepted as a *fait accompli* by the whole of Berlin society; it was during the Kulturkampf, and the Roman Catholic party, headed by my husband's family and strongly supported by the Empress, had made frantic efforts to oust the dreaded Minister. For a few short days they imagined they had succeeded, then all of a sudden the Emperor turned round, and wrote to his Chancellor that he hoped he would for long years to come continue to give his attention to public affairs. The sensation produced by this letter was immense. The Queen, quite disgusted, started for Coblenz the next day, and the indignation was general; but this manifestation of the sovereign's personal strength of will effectually crushed all efforts at revolt, and neither the Empress nor any of her friends, ever attempted after that to try their hand at politics, however much they might discuss them among themselves.

In this profound sense of patriotism, and this resolution to put the welfare of the State before every private feeling, the Crown Prince was very much akin to his father. He too was ready to sacrifice himself, but with one essential difference: whilst the old Emperor was always conscious of the dignity of the Crown, his son thought more about that of the wearer of it. Brought up in different times, he was all his life more or less

under the impression of the humiliation of the events of 1848, which had left a never-to be-effaced impression upon his youthful mind. He had grown up under it just as his father had entered life under the more terrible shadow of Jena, and the disasters through which Prussia had seen its very existence threatened. An abyss lay between the two men: the abyss which separates the sacred rights of kings from those of a sovereign people. William I. had seen the foot of the Corsican adventurer pressed down heavily upon his nation and his dynasty; he remembered the tears of his mother, and all those dark days when the Queen of Prussia wept in a mean little room at Memel. Frederick III. had witnessed the invasion of the palace of his fathers by the mob, and its triumph in the streets of the capital. He grew up with the image of Lassalle before his eyes, whilst his father had had that of the great Napoleon.

This explains the difference between the two men of whom I have spoken; it consisted of the distance which divides opinions from persons. The Crown Prince had, perhaps without realising it himself, felt the influence of the ideas which pervaded the generation to which he belonged. His father, on the contrary, had never witnessed the struggle which at all times has existed between the old people who are going away, and the young ones who aspire to take their places in the world. In his days no differences divided fathers from their sons; they had one common object in view, the

defeat of the man in whom they saw the enemy of all that they held dear. It was not a question of taking another generation's place, but the far, far more important one of winning back that place in which an usurper had boldly installed himself. Both old and young found themselves united in a common cause against a common foe. With Frederick III. things were very different. Born with a critical turn of mind, and a most generous disposition, he was by nature the sort of man who would embrace any new idea, if he thought it could be conducive to his neighbour's good. Brought up in liberal opinions by his mother, profoundly imbued with a sense of obligation towards humanity in general, his greatest mistake, if mistake it can be called, was to put that humanity before individualities and nationalities. He was not obstinate, and yet there was in him a good deal of the perseverance in opinions, which has always been one of the characteristics of the Hohenzollerns; devoted to his wife, and influenced by his father-in-law, the late Prince Consort, he had taken him for his model, forgetting that the position of a German Prince Consort in Constitutional England, could not be compared to that of the legitimate sovereign of Prussia. He did not realise that the great respect which Prince Albert displayed, and with which he tried to imbue Queen Victoria, for constitutional government, might have had its source in the fact that British public opinion would never have forgiven him, had he ever forgotten it. Wisdom is often a

matter of necessity; it is certain that at the time of the famous struggle between the old Emperor and his son, in the early days of William I.'s reign, he was right, and the Crown Prince was wrong in fact, however much he might have been justified in theory. This struggle unfortunately created a source of bitterness between the two men, which even the glorious events that led to the restoration of the Empire did not succeed in effacing.

It would have been difficult to find a more loving personality than that of Frederick III., he was everything that is noble, everything that is good; to listen to him was to grow better, to be near him was to get away from all the pettiness of the world, from all the fret, the evil, the injustice of so-called society. His mind was noble, his nature was true, his heart was kind. He had known disappointment and sorrow, had measured the ingratitude of mankind, had been confronted by some of the most serious problems of life, and had never failed in any of his duties. His was an heroic existence—as heroic as was his death—he had but few faults in him, and these were mostly of a kind which would have been called qualities in any one else. A dutiful son, an admirable husband and father, a faithful friend, a good man, there is no doubt that he would have made an excellent sovereign.

His political abilities have been discussed. It is certain that he had not the proud conviction of the nobility of his mission which distinguished

his father, nor the brilliancy which characterises his son, but he had a rectitude of opinions and a sound common sense which would have carried him through any difficulty, public or private. Schooled into submission to circumstances by long years of weary waiting for a Crown which ultimately was only to be his for three months, and grateful by nature, it is certain he would never have dismissed Prince Bismarck, nor have attempted to rule in defiance of public opinion, as his impetuous son has so often done. He would have put his vast experience of public affairs at the service, not only of his own country, but of the world in general.

As regards his life it was in some respects a painful one. It is certain that at no time, even when he exercised the Regency, did he wield great influence on public affairs; he was always suspected by his father, and made use of by Bismarck when the latter found himself in want of a support against some opinion of the old Emperor's with which he did not agree. The diary of the Crown Prince during the Franco-German war, compared with the memoirs of Prince Bismarck, throws a curious light upon the use that was made of the former, by the real master of the German Empire, one of whose greatest talents was the ability to discover the peculiarities of other people, and to turn them to the profit of his own schemes. Thus, during the long negotiations which preceded the memorable day when the old palace of the kings of France was the scene of the greatest triumph

of their immemorial enemies, had it not been for the Crown Prince, it is doubtful whether the proclamation of the Empire could have taken place so easily as it did at last. In this eventful circumstance Frederick III. showed himself a wiser statesman than his father, perhaps because he had at the same time fewer prejudices than was the case with the first German Emperor.

And yet he was, if possible, more imbued than his father with the sense of the inferiority of all other German princes in comparison with the supreme chief they had chosen for themselves. To illustrate my meaning I will relate a curious conversation I had with the then Crown Prince, after the tragic death of King Louis of Bavaria. We met at the wedding breakfast of one of the greatest friends of the Crown Princess, Countess Schleinitz, with the late Austrian Ambassador in Paris, Count Wolkenstein. I was sitting during the meal next to the Prince, who had that very same morning returned from Munich, where he had represented his father at the funeral of the unfortunate king. Of course, the king's mysterious end was the subject of all conversations, and naturally enough it formed part of ours. By a strange coincidence, I had myself returned that same day from Paris, where I had been on a visit to my aunts, and the Crown Prince asked me what was the impression produced in the French capital by the event. The conversation drifted then into another channel, and touched upon the foundation of the German Empire, when

the heir to the throne, in recapitulating the different facts which had made this restoration possible, spoke of what in his opinion ought to be the feelings of German princes towards the new organization which they had helped to build. He then used to me these remarkable words in French, which have ever since remained impressed upon my mind, and which struck me so much at the time that they were spoken, that I could not help mentioning them the very same day to a great friend I had, Colonel (now General) De Sancy, then French Military Attaché in Berlin, who, if he ever reads this book, will surely remember them. What the Crown Prince said was '*Les princes allemands devraient toujours se souvenir qu'ils ne sont que les pairs de l'empire—**P-A-I-R-S**, vous me comprenez?*' and he spelled the word slowly, just as I have written it. The key to the whole character of the man may be found in this remark.

I have said that Frederick III. was at heart a Liberal, and had the most religious respect for Constitutional Government. Indeed, he carried this respect almost too far—too far, at least, for the heir to a throne whose principles were so essentially different from those which have helped to make the grandeur of the English monarchy. In that sense he was, perhaps, too much under the influence of his wife, though, on the other hand, the Princess would have been decidedly more popular, if she had not yielded as much as she did to certain opinions of her husband. In many cases the Princess was, I think, given credit for influencing her husband,

when it was not true, as in one memorable instance, that of the execution of the would-be assassin of the old Emperor, young Hödel. At that time (the law has been modified since that day) it was imperative for the King of Prussia to sign personally every death warrant. William I. hated so much this part of his duties that no capital execution had ever taken place during his reign. When he was fired upon by Hödel, he declared at once his intention of pardoning the unfortunate wretch, but then took place the second, Nobiling's attempt, in which the aged monarch nearly lost his life. Whilst he lay on his sick bed, Hödel was tried, and, of course, sentenced to death. The Crown Prince was Regent. It was impossible for him to show himself merciful, especially in view of all that had been said regarding his relations with his father; but though he never hesitated one moment to do what was his duty, his repugnance to the application of the death penalty, was so profound that he allowed the public to learn something of it. Indeed, he went so far as to tell the British Ambassador, Lord Ampthill, who, with his wife, was among his greatest friends, that he had never felt more unhappy than on the day when, by a stroke of his pen, he had sent a human creature into eternity. The Crown Princess, though quite as kind as her husband, did not entirely share his opinions on that delicate point, as I happen to know. If she had sought to influence him at all, it would have been to overcome his scruples, but she did not; and as people in Berlin always

blamed her for everything they did not like in the Crown Prince, she was made responsible for the hesitation, if it could be called by that name, he had displayed, when confronted with one of the most painful duties of his high position. I was not in Berlin at the time of the illness and death of the Emperor Frederick, so can only speak of it by hearsay. I think it, therefore, better to abstain from relating what I have heard on that painful subject, and the differences which arose between the Empress and her eldest son, the present monarch. It is certain there were misunderstandings, as usual in such cases, rendered unnecessarily bitter by the interference of third parties. It is also certain that painful scenes followed upon the passing away of the unfortunate sovereign, but I do not think it wise to bring back to public remembrance events which ought to be forgotten, and actions which certainly are to-day the object of regret to those who were led into their performance.

The Emperor Frederick always treated me with the greatest kindness. I hope he guessed what profound admiration I had for his noble qualities, and how deeply I was devoted to him. There are moments in life when sympathy expressed in the way noble hearts alone can express it, helps one to bear the most bitter sorrows, and robs them of a part of their acuteness. The Crown Prince knew how to show sympathy; he found the words to say in every circumstance, he understood that great art of helping struggling souls. Thus at the time of the first grief that made me realise the

meaning of human life, when my eldest and then only child was suddenly taken away from me, it was the Crown Prince who, first of all those who had crowded around me, with banal expressions of a sympathy which was spoken but not felt, made me realise that I was not alone to grieve, and that there were in the world hearts who, having gone through the same agony I was enduring, could understand my own, and by their example encourage me to bear it in my turn. Now, after so many years, and after I have discovered that there are far more cruel ways to lose one's dear ones than by death, I still remember with gratitude the words spoken by the dead Emperor, and hear his voice ringing in my ears, when he told me not to grieve as grieve those who have no hope.

When Frederick III. had reached the last stage of his terrible illness, my own father was dying, and expired a few weeks before the Emperor. Family circumstances arose which made my husband ask for Russian naturalisation; he went to Berlin in regard to certain formalities connected with that affair, and the monarch, who himself was struggling with that dreaded reaper who appears at every door to claim his victims, sent for him for a last good-bye. He could not speak, but he wrote in pencil a message for me, which I shall always treasure as one of my dearest remembrances. It was a farewell which I may be excused, perhaps, if I consider in the light of a blessing.

Having said as much, I must hesitate before

attempting to describe the Crown Princess. Speaking of her, touches on one of these subjects which it seems sacrilegious to tackle. On the morrow which followed upon her death, I retraced in a few short pages all she was to me, all I have ever found her. I do not think I can add anything to this sketch, written whilst still smarting under the sorrow with which my heart was almost breaking. The Empress was something more than a woman, she was as far above humanity as goodness is above wickedness, virtue superior to vice. Retrace her sufferings, relate what she had to endure, drag out of the cases of my memory, where they are enshrined, the story of all she went through, is almost impossible; it would be profanation. I cannot speak of the Empress Frederick, the remembrance of her moves in me a thousand emotions which I believed dead and buried for ever. It is impossible, I repeat it, to write the history of that noble life, and anything one might say about it, would only give a false idea of that 'perfect woman, nobly planned,' who was never understood, never appreciated, and who died as she had lived, solitary and alone among her children, and among the gay world, far above all those who surrounded her, and to whom she was a silent, an involuntary rebuke.

I will therefore only relate incidents connected with her official existence, as they occur to me, whilst going on with the story of these years during which she played such a prominent part in the world. They may perhaps help those who never saw her, to understand certain sides of her magnifi-

cent character; but they will never describe her as she deserves to be described, a Queen who, in spite of her great position, did not forget she was a woman, gifted with a woman's tenderness, a woman's charm, a woman's warm heart. I do not feel even worthy to pray for her; I hope she prays for me in that Heaven of which she must be one of the brightest stars.

CHAPTER VI.

Prince Bismarck and the Kulturkampf—'Politique en jupons'—The Chancellor under-estimates the Folly of his Opponents—The Radziwill Palace as the Centre of Catholic Intrigue—Archbishop Ledochowski's Imprisonment—The Catholic Leaders, Mallinkrodt and Windthorst—Bismarck's Attitude towards the Crown Prince—and towards the Emperor—The Character of Princess Bismarck—Count Herbert—How the Iron Chancellor won his Way.

At the time of my marriage Prince Bismarck was still to be occasionally met with in society, or at some great Court function. He had not yet developed into the hermit of Varzin or Friedrichsruhe, and his tall, commanding figure could be seen in the drawing-rooms of the Empress or of the Crown Princess. It was at the latter's that I was introduced to him, a month or two after I arrived in Berlin. He was most gracious to me, as was his wife, for whom, let me say it at once, I always had the greatest respect, and with whom my relations always remained excellent ones.

In these early days of 1874, the Kulturkampf was in full swing, and I was in the very thick of the fight that was going on. My husband's family was at the head of the Catholic party in Prussia, and their house constituted the centre of opposition to the Chancellor. He knew it, and

in this war, which lasted until the dismissal of Prince Bismarck by the present Emperor, he certainly did not use 'white gloves,' or spare his antagonists in any way. He was doubly irritated against my sister-in-law, because of her relationship with the French Ambassador, Vicomte de Gontaut Biron, who was also one of the Empress's favourites, and whom he accused of French intrigues. I must say that the accusation was not unjustified, for certainly many things took place which would have taxed the patience of a man far less irritable than was the Chancellor. Later on the Emperor put an end to this *politique en jupons*, to use Prince Bismarck's own expression; but at the time I am speaking of, it flourished to an extent which would never have been tolerated in any other country. Gossip was rampant, and the old King was worried out of his life by his wife, and the numerous attempts she made to induce him to compel his Minister to desist from a line of conduct which, as she prophesied, was bound to result in ruin to the State. At first the Prince did not attach much importance to these intrigues, but later on he grew to consider them in a far more serious light than they deserved, especially when the religious situation became more acute, and the opposition in the Reichstag more troublesome. It was then that he developed that tyrannical disposition with which he will be associated in the minds of posterity, and which was artificially fed in him by his friends and foes alike. He grew sullen, morose, impatient of con-

tradictions, and isolated himself more and more from the world. The faults which in some cases made him unbearable, were caused largely by the solitude in which he had elected to live. Surrounded by flatterers, he grew impatient of criticisms, and far too much convinced of the infallibility of his own judgments.

He was vindictive to a degree which bordered on ferocity; his conduct towards Count Arnim was altogether unpardonable, for, as is well known to those who were behind the scenes, politics had very little to do with it. The prosecution was instituted simply because the Prince was determined to gratify his revenge against a man who, after having been for many years his tool, refused, at last, to carry out the work he was ordered to perform, and also against one in whom he feared he might one day find a rival.

To come back to the Kulturkampf, I am going to say what will astonish many people, and that is, that I do not believe it would have reached the acuteness it did in time acquire, if the bishops had not been encouraged in their resistance by the members of the Catholic party at Court. A wrong idea as to the strength and importance of this party existed abroad, dating from the time when Prussia was a small kingdom. Then, when it was trying to recover from its wounds after the humiliations of Jena, its sovereign never aspired to play a large part in European politics, but was content to lead the semi-intellectual, semi-official life which to this day is being led at the smaller

German Courts, and allowed the opinions of his familiars to weigh in even the weightiest matters of the State.

The victories of 1866 and 1870 came so unexpectedly, and in such rapid succession, that people hardly realised their importance, or understood that after his return to Berlin as German Emperor, William I. could not look at things any more in the same light as he used to do when he was simply King of Prussia. Bismarck understood, of course, the change at once, and, perhaps, even before it actually took place, and the old King was dimly conscious of it too. No one among his *entourage* was. They imagined that a Court intrigue could rid them of the powerful man to whom Germany owed her reconstitution, and that a few words from the Queen, or an appeal to the humanitarian feelings of the Emperor, would finally block Prince Bismarck's path. This stupidity only exasperated him, and justified in his eyes a line of conduct destined to prevent the feeble adversaries with whom he had to deal from having anything to say in regard to the conduct of the affairs of the State. He knew very well that the Reichstag was not sufficiently united to organize a serious opposition to his plans, that in the Prussian Chambers his authority would always remain paramount, and he believed that a very short time would see the end of the struggle in which he was engaged. Unfortunately for himself, he did not sufficiently appreciate the strength of the Catholic party and its Church. He forgot

that Pius IX. could not live for ever, and that if he were succeeded by a Pope not afflicted with his determination to oppose a *non possumus* to every effort at conciliation, not drawn on the lines he wished, his (the Chancellor's) position would become impossible. He would, whether he liked it or not, have to surrender, not to those whom he had fought, but to the principle which they represented. He looked upon the struggle he provoked with the glance of a statesman who forgets that the events of the world are not solely and entirely led by politics, but that sometimes personal intrigues of the lowest kind influence them.

I was but a child in 1874, considered as such by all my family. Later on I am sure that they would never have discussed certain things so freely before me as they did then. But in these early days they all believed they could mould me according to their own ideas. Unfortunately, I had been brought up in the intellectual atmosphere of the Hôtel Balzac, and by a father possessed of all the philosophical principles of the eighteenth century. I had been taught to consider the influence of the clergy in private life, as well as in politics, as an evil which ought to be fought against with energy.

My father in all his letters constantly encouraged me to resist all efforts to tempt me into the ranks of those who put the Church before every other consideration. I therefore listened to all I heard without sympathy, but with great atten-

tion. I regret now that I was not old enough at that time to form opinions of my own as to the value of the struggle that was going on; but at seventeen one only *sees* things, it is impossible to appreciate them as they ought to be. What I remember most clearly from these years is that constant communications were exchanged between my husband's family and the Archbishop of Posen, Count (afterwards Cardinal) Ledochowski. I do not think he himself had any illusions as to the issue of the war declared by Prince Bismarck against the Catholic Church, but he was influenced by the great position of the Radziwills, and believed they could, through their influence over the King, obtain from him certain concessions which the Chancellor would never have dreamed of making.

The whole Kulturkampf reposed on this misunderstanding, which Bismarck, with all his genius and acuteness, had not foreseen, because he would not admit that serious people like the Archbishops of Posen and Cologne could believe the assurances of men who had nothing to do with the conduct of State affairs, that they were in a position to influence the sovereign in opposition to himself. Yet it was the case; and I am fully convinced that if the Radziwill Palace had not existed, the famous journey to Canossa, which Bismarck undertook so many years later, would never have taken place; or at least would have been undertaken differently. I remember well the day when the news of the arrest of Mgr. Ledochowski

reached us. It was in February, a dull, bleak, winter morning; I had gone downstairs to see the wife of one of my brother's cousins, Princess Ferdinand Radziwill, the mother of that Prince Radziwill, *attaché* to the Russian Embassy in London, whose wife, the lovely Mlle. de Benardaky, made such a sensation by her beauty a year or two ago. I found her with an open telegram in her hand containing the news that the Archbishop had been arrested the night before. Both she and her husband were terribly excited, and convinced that the event was destined to have the greatest political consequences. My cousin was a member of the Reichstag, and his brother, Prince Edmund Radziwill—then already in holy orders, and vicar of the little town of Ostrowo, in Prussian Poland, the same one in which the Archbishop was confined—obtained the Government's permission to share the prelate's captivity. He was a keen politician, and both in private life as well as in his capacity of member of the Reichstag, took a leading part in the struggle. He was by far the most able man of the whole family, and a perfect saint as regards character. But he was prejudiced, as they all were, and as it was impossible for any one, brought up as my father-in-law had brought up his sons and nephews, not to be.

When Count Ledochowski was thrown into prison the general feeling in governmental circles was, that it would put an end to all attempt at resistance on the part of the Catholics; whilst they thought that it would work the Chancellor's

defeat in his designs. Neither of these forebodings turned out to be true. The time had gone by for martyrs to be taken *au sérieux*, and it had not yet come for the Church of Rome to renounce the fighting qualities which have always distinguished it. The result of this mistaken impression on both sides was an unsettled condition of things which, even when it was forgotten by the outside world, exasperated the Chancellor into making him exaggerate the dangers of a situation he had contrived to create, through not having realised the evil which stupid men may make in the world.

In spite of all the rigour of the Archbishop's captivity, communications were constant between him and the leaders of the Catholic party. They mostly passed through my cousins, but other people were also eager to act as his emissaries. He himself made up his mind most courageously to accept the consequences of a situation he had falsely judged. He determined, once he was in prison, to stay there; which was certainly the best thing he could have done under the circumstances.

I never saw Count Ledochowski at that time. Years later I met him in Rome, when he was already Cardinal and Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He gave a most warm welcome to my husband and myself, and several interviews we had with him left me in profound admiration of his great qualities, as well as of the strength of his intellect. They

made me wonder, more than I had ever done before, how he could have been led into believing that people, not even possessed of an average intelligence, could, simply through their social position in the world, be mighty enough to fight with success the greatest statesman of modern times.

In 1874 the Catholic party in the Reichstag possessed one member whose eloquence made him a great power: it was Dr. Mallinkrodt, one of the ablest speakers in the House, and the only person in all the Centre possessed of a clear appreciation of the new system of politics inaugurated by the foundation of the German Empire. He was a man of sincere convictions, not subordinated to considerations of sympathy or of dynasty, as was the case with Dr. Windthorst. Unfortunately, he died relatively young, in the full force of his political powers, and just as his great reputation was beginning to be universally acknowledged. When he passed away, no one remained except Dr. Windthorst, who brought his Hanoverian sympathies to bear upon every question with which he was concerned, and whose great, though unacknowledged ambition, was to get one day a portfolio in the Prussian Ministry. He was a marvellous tactician, a speaker without rival, and a consummate leader. Through him the Centre party became a disciplined thing which could almost be compared to the German army. He drilled it into absolute obedience to his orders, and never allowed hesitation or a personal scruple

to interfere with his plans. It is to be for ever regretted that his reconciliation was not effected with the Chancellor, and that a *rapprochement* between the two men only took place when Prince Bismarck's days as a Minister were already numbered.

Personally I never took any part in the religious quarrels which divided our family and Prince Bismarck. Even at the time when they had reached their most acute stage, I continued visiting once or twice a year at the Chancellor's house, and I remember that, just after the Radziwill Palace had been bought by the Government, and the Prince had taken up his residence there, I called one morning on the Princess, and found them still sitting at a late lunch. Both she and the Prince took me over the whole house, and he made a few joking remarks at the pleasure I must have felt when I left it. Much later, after the Congress at Berlin, I started on my own account a salon of opposition to the Chancellor, but the religious question had nothing to do with it, and the reasons for my conduct proceeded simply from Russian resentment at his behaviour in 1878, as well as from my admiration for the Crown Prince and Princess, with whom he was at that time at daggers drawn, and also a little from my French sympathies. It was curious to watch the Prince on the rare occasions when he was present at any Court festivity. He always stood in a corner of the room, almost alone, and dominating with the head and

shoulders all the other men present. One occasion remains particularly engraved upon my mind. It was at the Crown Prince's, after one of the quarrels between the heir to the throne and the Minister had been patched up by some kind friends. The party was given for the birthday of the Crown Princess, and great was our surprise when, upon entering the apartment where the company assembled, we saw the Chancellor. I do not think I exaggerate when I say that everybody strained their heads and their necks to see what was going to happen. The doors were thrown open, and the Royal host and hostess made their appearance. The Princess began speaking to the ladies, then very quietly went up to Prince Bismarck. I could not hear what she said, but she talked with him for a certain length of time, without affectation of an exaggerated amiability, but also without any marked coldness or stiffness. Master of himself, as the Chancellor generally was, he seemed embarrassed, and was evidently ill at ease. He stooped down to reply to the Princess's remarks, and nervously played with his long military glove. As soon as she had left him, the Crown Prince approached him, and then came the marvellous change which must have struck any person gifted with the slightest degree of observation. Bismarck straightened himself up, every trace of annoyance or embarrassment disappeared, he looked the heir to the throne straight in the face, or across the head as the case might be. The arrogance of his

demeanour was not only marked, but exaggerated; he scarcely replied to the Prince, and made him repeat one or two remarks. In one word he affected the attitude of being the real master of his future master. The scene would have deserved a St. Simon to describe it.

Another occasion when I saw Prince Bismarck was on a New Year's Day when we had assembled to congratulate the Emperor and Empress. It was only the members of princely families who were admitted to that privilege, so that the company was necessarily small. The Chancellor rarely put in an appearance, being mostly at that season of the year at Varzin. This time, however, he happened to be in town, and, much to every one's astonishment, he came to the palace. When the doors were opened, and the Kaiser perceived him, he at once crossed over to him, and the two began an animated conversation. It was almost touching to watch the great Chancellor speaking to the old sovereign; the respect in his countenance and the expression of his eyes had something peculiar I never remember having seen in them before or after that day. Beside him the Emperor appeared a shrunken little old man, with tottering steps, leaning on a stick (it was the year after Nobiling's attempt when he had hardly yet recovered), whilst gigantic in his white Cuirassier uniform, resembling a knight of ancient times, the figure of the Iron Chancellor towered above him, as it towered above the Empire he had created out of the ruins of old. The spectacle

was impressive, and I believe everybody present was struck with the grandeur of it, but I doubt if many observed what to me was its most curious part, the homage Bismarck's eyes paid to the sovereign, without whom he never could have become the great man he had risen to be, whom in his inmost soul he respected as much as he loved, and to whom he had given all the admiration, all the affection, his stern heart was capable of feeling.

Few people have realised that peculiarity of Bismarck's nature. He was essentially affectionate; a more devoted husband or father never existed. His correspondence with his wife has revealed to us the domestic side of his character. He was a man made for home-life, liking it, finding in it—in the tenderness of his wife and children—a solace amid the cares of the State, and the stupendous responsibilities which lay upon his shoulders. He was a good friend, he never forsook those whom he liked. If at times his contempt for humanity made itself apparent in brutalities as great as was his genius, he never lost the real kindness nor the genuineness of his feelings. His experiences of life and mankind had been numerous, curious, and bitter, but the freshness of certain impressions had remained, as well as love for those to whom ties of relationship or friendship united him. In the midst of the most serious affairs of the State, he never forgot to inquire after his grandchildren, and a small ailment of the little mites made him more unhappy than when one of his most complicated political plans had failed.

It would be hardly possible to imagine a more happy life than the one he led with his wife. Even the religious question, upon which their opinions were entirely different, did not ruffle the harmony between him and the Princess. She was, in her way, just as remarkable a personality as her husband. Not at all a woman of the world, not brilliant, she had that strong dose of intelligence and common-sense which goes so far to ensure success; devoted to the Prince, she knew how to efface herself when it was necessary, and never left off watching over him with the tenderness of one who puts the beloved person before all personal ambitions. For her, he was perfection, the one being upon earth, the sole object of her care. During the long years their union lasted, they never had an altercation or even difference, and it is to be doubted whether the Prince would have achieved all he did, if he had not found in his home the necessary encouragement, and above all that affection which, like faith, moves mountains.

In spite of all this, and perhaps because of all this, it must be nevertheless acknowledged that occasions arose when Princess Bismarck harmed her husband. She had certain German prejudices which he did not share, but which, in consequence of remarks she made at times, were attributed to him also. She hated everything that was French, and to use Max O'Rell's expression, firmly believed, 'that the devil at an early stage of his

career was naturalised a Frenchman, and settled permanently in Paris.' For her everything French was an abomination, and she rejoiced at the successes of the German armies in the same way as the Jews rejoiced at the slaying of the Philistines. In her eyes there was nothing good in France, and it was quite sincerely she prayed God to watch over her husband, and not lead him into temptation when he was in Paris. It was the same in several other things; she was narrow-minded, did not understand the greatness of the deeds the man to whom she was united had performed, but at the same time, she was fully conscious he was a great man. The gravest matters appeared in her eyes to be important only in so far as they were personal to him, or associated with his name; she was the wife of Prince Bismarck, not the consort of the German Chancellor.

But she was good, kind, charitable, a devoted mother, a careful mistress of her household. She was generally respected, and even the smart set did not turn into ridicule her extraordinary dresses, or simple manners. Her character was sincere, her love of truth remarkable, her piety proceeded from her heart, and had no affectation in it. She made her husband a better wife than, perhaps, any woman would have done who understood better the public side of his character. She was to him the slippers and dressing-gown, without which even a genius cannot live comfortably.

Of their three children there is little to say. The youngest son, Count William, has already followed his parents to the grave. Prince Herbert has turned into a country gentleman, and will probably never reappear upon the political scene. He was an example of how rarely great men beget children who resemble them. He was not popular in the personal sense, and seemed to think that as the son of the imperious Chancellor, he was a privileged person. It is to be hoped that all that has since happened in the political world has softened his character, and brought to light the qualities which, in spite of his detractors, he, as a son of the greatest genius of modern times, can scarcely fail to possess. Prince Bismarck's daughter, married to Count Rantzau, is the only member of his family who has inherited his extraordinary intelligence; she was a great help to him during the last years of his life, and, after Princess Bismarck's death, tried as well as she could to replace her. It is said she could not bring herself to be polite to William II. when, after his official reconciliation with the Chancellor, he visited Friedrichsruhe. I do not know how far this report is true, but from what I have seen of the Countess, I think it may be correct. I believe no one in the Prince's family has forgiven the Emperor, and strange as it may seem to say so, it was perhaps the old giant whom he crushed so ruthlessly, who best understood his conduct, and in his inmost heart found excuses for him.

I must, before I end this chapter, relate an

incident which will show in what way Prince Bismarck made war upon those he disliked.

He would not have dared to attack openly my husband's family, unless he had had positive proofs which he could have laid before the Kaiser of their intrigues. These, of course, it was next to impossible to get. He therefore hit upon the following expedient. My brother-in-law had a secretary, called M. von Kehler, a former clerk in the Foreign Office. He had been a Protestant, was converted to the Roman Catholic faith, and like all converts, became a fanatic, which fact did not prevent him from being a very pleasant and amiable man. He was treated as a friend of the family, was in general highly respected, and an influential member of the Reichstag. In May or June, 1874, my brother-in-law was at Ems with the Emperor, most of the family were away from town, and we were about five or six people left in the immense old house. We were startled one day, on going down to dinner, by a visit from the police with orders to search the papers of M. von Kehler, in the room he occupied in the Radziwill Palace, a room in which he did not live, but which he only used as a workroom. My husband's cousins loudly protested, but the orders were formal; the police took possession of the room, and under pretence of looking into M. von Kehler's drawers, examined every paper belonging to my brother-in-law or cousins. I never knew the end of the story, nor whether anything was found; but I much doubt it, as the greatest precautions were always ob-

served as regards documents. I do not know whether any complaint of this unwarrantable interference ever reached the Emperor's ears; but the incident throws a curious light on the ways in which Prince Bismarck managed to do what he wished, and get what he liked.

CHAPTER VII.

The Princess Victoria's Influence on Berlin Society—Lord Ampthill—The other Ambassadors—The Princess of Wales—A Story of the Russian Empress's Visit to England—Court Entertainments—Outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War—Skobeleff and Osman Pasha—An Incident of the Shipka Pass—The Treaty of San Stefano.

Berlin Society, at the time I am speaking of, was very exclusive. With the exception of the Crown Princess, no one ever dreamed of admitting into 'society,' people belonging to the middle classes. Artists, journalists, literary men, or professors at the University, were rather looked upon as curiosities, when not as necessary evils. The Princess Victoria was the first to give them equality of treatment with the narrow circle of what were called Hoffahige people. At the small tea-parties given at the Palace, men like Mommsen, Dubois Raymond, Helmholtz, Ranke, the historian, Rudolph and Paul Lindau, the journalists, were met. Her great intelligence enabled her to discuss with them the studies which had made their names famous; and often, without knowing it, she helped to educate Berlin society, by speaking with freedom on topics considered—until she brought them into prominence—as the exclusive possession of those

who had devoted their lives to the mastering of them.

The Empress, though she often made a point of encouraging science, literature, and art, did it in a way which accentuated the distance which separated its representatives from the select circle out of which she chose her intimate friends. Berlin society was not amusing, though amusements were perpetually going on; but it was hospitable, and it differed in that, at least as regards foreigners, from St. Petersburg in its present days. Diplomats were made much of, and foremost among them ranked the British Ambassador, Lord Ampthill, at that time known as Lord Odo Russell. I do not think that any one who has known that most charming and clever man has forgotten him, nor the tact, the intelligence, and the consummate political ability which made him such a distinguished statesman. He succeeded in remaining on good terms with Prince Bismarck, as well as the friend—I think I can almost say the intimate friend—of the Crown Prince and Princess. His knowledge of the world was marvellous, his experience of affairs quite extraordinary. He knew unerringly the right thing to be done, and never found himself embarrassed, no matter in what situation he happened to be. Married to a daughter of the late Lord Clarendon, he found in her a true helpmate, and one in every respect worthy of him. They entertained most hospitably, and no diplomats before or after them, have ever

succeeded in establishing themselves in the same position they had acquired in society. I cannot help thinking that had Lord Ampthill been alive in 1888, many events which accompanied the illness and death of the Emperor Frederick, would never have taken place.

The Austrian Ambassador was Count Karolyi, whose wife, the lovely Countess Fanny Karolyi, was so much admired in London, and has left such a charming remembrance in the minds of all those who saw her. She also was fond of entertaining, and during the Congress of 1878 her house was the meeting-place of all the notabilities that crowded in Berlin at that important time.

The Russian Ambassador was Baron d'Oubril, a pleasant little man, but one who, after the tragic death of his wife (she was drowned whilst bathing) was seen but little in society. Italy had not yet raised her legation to the rank of Embassy, and of the other members of the Corps Diplomatique there is very little to say, with the exception of the two French Ambassadors, the Vicomte de Gontaut Biron and the Comte de St. Vallier.

The first named of these personages had been the first representative appointed by the Republic after the Treaty of Frankfurt. He belonged to one of the oldest and proudest families of the *ancien régime*, and being a very pleasant, shrewd man, without being a first-rank statesman, he had managed, with the help of considerable tact, to make for himself a good position in the Prussian capital. He was

related to my sister-in-law, as well as to the old Duke of Sagan, the son of the beautiful Duchess of Sagan, whose numerous love adventures, as well as her long liaison with her uncle, the famous Prince de Talleyrand, have made so well known. These alliances helped M. de Gontaut to make his way at first, but later on they became a source of serious embarrassment, which led to his retirement into private life. Through them he was furnished with much untrustworthy information. Prince Bismarck never forgave him the scare of 1875, nor certain reports he had made to the Duke Decazes, at that time Minister for Foreign Affairs, which were not founded on facts, but on conversations with people who had no means of guessing the designs of the Chancellor. M. de Gontaut was replaced by the Comte de St. Vallier, one of the ablest diplomats France has ever possessed. He was one of the greatest friends I have ever had, so it is difficult for me to speak of him without indulging in terms which might, perhaps, appear exaggerated to the reader. We had become mutually attracted from the first days of his arrival in Berlin, and later on, when his father and mother, the Marquis and Marquise de St. Vallier, joined him in Berlin, I used to see them daily, and up to the death of the old Marquis, which occurred a few years after that of his son, I went every autumn to spend a few days with him, at his château in the department of Aisne, near Laon. It was called Coucy les Eppes, and was a

large country house such as one only meets in France, with an old-fashioned garden, and a churchyard, which formed almost part of the house.

Apart from diplomats, what one called the princely families occupied a special place in Berlin society. Among them the Duke and Duchess of Sagan were certainly the leaders. Born a Frenchwoman, she was the daughter of the Marshal de Castellane; he was a perfect type of the grand seigneur of Louis XIV., she was one of the cleverest, wittiest women of the second Empire. Every one liked her, even those whom she scratched with her tongue, always sharp even when it was kind, and no one took in bad part anything she said, perhaps because all were more or less conscious of the vast amount of honesty and genuineness, which were her principal characteristics.

Of other prominent members of Berlin society there were Count and Countess Stolberg. He became in later years Vice-Chancellor; she was a Princess Reuss, and a most amiable woman. Then there were the numerous Hohenlohes and Ratibors; Prince and Princess Pless, whose lovely house was an object of admiration. The Princess also belonged to the superior beings of this world, and, as such so often do, died at a comparatively early age. Then there was lovely Princess Carolath, whose beauty broke many hearts, and who in her turn was to fall a victim to her love for Count Herbert Bismarck. Indeed, Berlin was

full of pretty women, and I doubt whether any Court could have boasted of so many beautiful faces as it did at the time I am writing of.

The first winter I spent there was very animated indeed, after the mourning for the Dowager Queen was over. At Court there were no balls, it is true, but a great concert took place at which the Crown Princess, just back from Russia, where she had been present at the wedding of the Duke of Edinburgh, spoke to me of her impressions of the ceremony, and showed me a beautiful ruby bracelet she wore on her arm, adding that it had been given to her by the Emperor Alexander.

It was about that time that the French Ambassador gave the only ball I have been present at at the French Embassy. It was made a great event of, as it was the first festivity given there since 1870. The Emperor and the whole Court were present, and people were lavish in their attentions to M. de Gontaut, who must have had every reason to be satisfied. He was justified in writing to the Duke Decazes that he had serious hopes that the bitter feelings which still existed between German and French society would in time be allayed.

I have spoken already of the Duke Decazes; he had married a niece of my father's, Mlle. de Lowenthal, and there was a time when I saw a great deal of his wife. He has never himself been sufficiently appreciated, and a life of him has to

be written yet. It would throw a curious light on certain sides of the Frankfurt treaty, about which he possessed a quantity of secret information. It would also explain how it happened that the Government of Marshal MacMahon contrived to maintain itself for such a long time in spite of his own monarchical leanings, and the preponderance of the legitimistic element in all his Cabinets, with the exception perhaps of the one presided over by M. Jules Simon. The Duke Decazes left a son, as inheritor of his name, who became the husband of an American, Miss Singer, who died tragically and suddenly at the early age of twenty-five years.

The Duke of Edinburgh was married to the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrowna of Russia, at St. Petersburg, in January of that same year, 1874. On their return from the wedding festivities, the then Prince and Princess of Wales stopped for a few days in Berlin, and at a State dinner at the old Castle I saw for the first time the present Queen of England. I believe she had never yet appeared officially at the Prussian Court, for I remember the Empress Augusta presenting to her all the ladies that were present; and every one was very anxious to catch a glimpse of her. When I look upon the Queen now at the Opera, or driving in the streets, it seems to me to be impossible that thirty years have gone by since that day. We have all changed, she alone has remained immovable in her loveliness, defying

time and wrinkles in a way which is perfectly marvellous.

A few days later, the newly married couple themselves arrived in Berlin on their way to England. The Duchess held a small reception of Russian ladies at the Embassy: so far as I can remember there were but three of us—Princess Biron of Courland (born Princess Mestchersky), Madame de Radowitz, *née* Ozeroff, wife of the present German Ambassador at Madrid, and myself. In the evening there was a State performance at the Opera, where the young bride appeared blazing with diamonds and sapphires, and the next day the young couple took leave of the Royal family, on their way to their new home.

A few months later saw Alexander II. himself arrive in Berlin, where he was given a warm welcome. In those days his visit was an annual event, as well as his cure at Ems, where, if one is to believe Court gossips, many interesting matters of politics were discussed between him and the Emperor William.

My first child was born on December 7th, 1874, and very soon after that event, I was one of the gay world again. The winter was one of the most brilliant which had been known at the Prussian Court, and entertainment followed upon entertainment. In February was given at the Crown Prince's palace that wonderful Venetian Fête, at which the Princess appeared in the dress of Leonora Gonzaga, in the celebrated picture

by Titian at the Pitti Palace at Florence. Angeli painted her subsequently in it, and nothing could have suited her better than this simple, but effective costume. The Queen and her sister, Princess Charles, both appeared in white dominoes at this ball, and we were all very much amused by the illusion under which they both laboured, that no one had recognised them.

In June of the same year, my husband was sent to attend some manœuvres at Warsaw, where the Emperor of Russia was holding them personally. I accompanied him there, and we went thence to pay a visit to my father. In Warsaw, we were present at one of the most enjoyable entertainments of my whole life. It was the ball given to the sovereign by Count Kotzebue, the Governor-General of the Kingdom of Poland, in the old castle. I have never seen anything more fairy-like. The long terraces stretched all along the banks of the river, ornamented with rare plants and orange-trees, the aspect of the illuminated town, the brilliant uniforms, lovely jewels and dresses, the beauty of the women, all contrived to make the scene like one of those of which one reads the description in the 'Arabian Nights.' It was at this memorable ball that the young Marchioness Wielopolska made her first and I think only appearance at the Russian Court. Born an Austrian, a Princess Montenuovo, she was by her father a grand-daughter of the Empress Marie Louise.

No one had ever understood why she married the Marquis, and happiness did not follow upon that union. She was beautiful, in spite of the Austrian lip which was rather prominent in her face, and one of the sweetest creatures that ever lived. Soon afterwards she died, after a long and somewhat mysterious illness, universally regretted.

Another rather prominent figure at these Warsaw festivities, was the wife of Field-Marshal Bariatinski, the hero of the Caucasus. She was a Circassian Princess by birth, who had been carried off by force by the Marshal, and had had adventures which smacked more of romance than of reality. At the time I saw her, she was quite an old woman, and had but few traces of her former beauty left, but she was made very much of at Court, by reason of her husband's great position. They inhabited a Royal residence near Warsaw, Skierniewice, which had been given by the Emperor to Prince Bariatinski for life, and where, later on, the famous interview took place between the three—the German, Austrian, and Russian—Emperors.

About that time, the end of 1875, the first rumours of the Bosnian insurrection began to circulate. At first no one was inclined to attach much importance to them, but as time went on, the situation became more serious, and popular feeling in Russia ran very high on the subject. It is a mistake to say that the Government en-

couraged it from the first, whatever it did later on. No one wished for war, neither the Emperor, nor his counsellors, but in the country, and especially in certain circles in Moscow, the feeling that something ought to be done towards the relief of the Christian subjects of the Sultan became very strong indeed. Committees were formed, and subscriptions arrived freely from all kind of people. The merchant class of the old capital especially became very excited, and what would have been called anywhere else but in Russia incendiary speeches were made daily at private and public reunions. The leading papers of Moscow, at their head the *Russ*, edited by the great Slavophil leader, Iwan Aksokoff, never let a day pass without calling upon all Orthodox people to work for the deliverance from the Turkish yoke of their brethren in race and religion. No one at that time understood what kind of people the Bulgarians or Servians were, or realised their characters. They became martyrs before one even knew whether they had suffered. The movement was a purely artificial one, and yet it very soon was transformed into a national one, and never did the Holy Orthodox Church assert its influence more than at that time, when it actually forced the hand of the autocratic Power which governed it. No effort of the Emperor availed, no official remonstrance could stop the movement, when once it was set in motion. All the exuberance of the Russian nation, which, after

having been stirred up by the reforms of the beginning of the reign of Alexander II., had again relapsed into apathy, wakened up once more, and found an outlet in the feeling which threw half of the country into the arms of a few men who, by their mere word, had let out that torrent of enthusiasm. It became the fashion, when the Servian and Montenegrin revolt broke out, to send volunteers to join the insurgents, and men used to start in small bands, and in great secrecy, to offer them their help. My own brother was one of them, and when the battle of Alexinatz was fought, and lost by the Servians, St. Petersburg society, which had seen some of its best-known men fall, became quite frantic. Officers left their regiments in masses, until at last the Government was forced to forbid the granting of all leave. But it was already too late. The harm had been done, and it is only to be regretted that the Emperor was induced about that time to mobilise his army. A little longer, and a good deal of the enthusiasm which had marked the first half of 1876 would have died away; indeed, it did not last long among the officers who had joined the Servians, for they all of them came back, more or less disgusted with their cowardice and untrustworthiness. A reaction began to make itself felt, which would inevitably have brought about the end of the movement had the declaration of war against Turkey not given a new impetus to feelings which were already beginning to be worn out.

In July or August, 1876, we were for a few days in Moscow, on our way to my estate on the Wolga. It was at the time when the Slavophil Committees were most energetic, and were working with all their might in favour of what were called 'our little Slav brethren.' We happened, quite accidentally, to visit the famous monastery of Troitsa, near Moscow; the same place whence St. Serge had sent Dmitri Donskoi to fight the Tartars. That very same day had been chosen by the Slavophil Society of Moscow to send there to be blessed a flag which they were forwarding to the Servians. When we entered the principal church of the celebrated convent, we found it packed full with volunteers and an excited crowd.

The Archimandrite came out, and, after having given Holy Communion to the volunteers, who, already in their uniform, were kneeling on the pavement of the church, he raised up the flag and blessed them with it. An immense acclamation filled the whole of the vast building, an acclamation which could almost have been called a sob. Whatever happened later on, the people out of whose breast it burst were sincere, and had no afterthought mixing itself up with the feeling which made them empty their pockets, and give all their contents for the cause which they had at heart. In that moment of enthusiasm the whole soul of the Russian nation spoke out. There was no political or personal feeling dominating

these weeping woman and resolute men. It was an outburst of religious conviction, equal to the one which, in the first days of the Crusade, threw half Europe at the feet of the monk who beckoned to it, to help him in rescuing the grave of Christ from the hands of the infidels who held it.

A few months later war really burst out, a serious war, the importance of which was appreciated but by few, and one of the consequences of which was the murder of the unfortunate monarch who had not found the strength to resist the movement which brought it on. In April, 1877, the Russian troops crossed the Turkish frontier. What followed belongs to history. The Danube was crossed, Plevna was invested, and then came the dark days, the despairing hours, when hope seemed to have disappeared, and when blood flowed in torrents without any apparent result. The assault of September 11th still lives in the memory of those who witnessed its horrors and its furies. In one day over twenty thousand men fell, and Skobeleff became famous, and, stern soldier as he was, burst out crying, when he looked at the dreadful battle-field covered with dead and wounded, exclaiming, as he did so, 'To think that all this has been in vain—all in vain!' When Plevna fell, the tension under which we had lived, was so intense, that I think we forgot to rejoice. Like all great expected events, it left one calm—perhaps because suffering had annihilated all sources of joy.

In the army a sullen feeling prevailed, exasperation against certain of its leaders, together with admiration for the bravery of Osman Pacha. When the old warrior, wounded and disabled, at last gave up his sword, the Grand Duke Nicholas went out to meet him, and, after greeting him with all the respect due to him, offered him the seat on the right in his carriage. Slowly they drove together down the lines of the Turkish prisoners, who received them in grave silence, but when they reached the Russian camps an immense acclamation burst out from the ranks. It was the victors saluting their enemy. Over the pale face of the Turkish hero, a faint and sad smile flitted for a moment; he gravely greeted, in his turn, the troops whom he had so often defeated, before he found himself overwhelmed by their number, and by circumstances.

Later on came the defence of Shipka, and the terrible battles which transformed the Balkans into one bloody field. There is an episode of the crossing of these mountains which is little known, and which deserves to be related. When General Raiewski made up his mind to attack Suleiman Pacha, on a winter morning, with the thermometer at about twenty-five degrees centigrade below freezing point and in the midst of a snowstorm such as had rarely been witnessed, even in these parts, the question arose how to make the artillery cross the mountain passes, rendered almost impassable by the snow. Whilst it was being discussed,

the General was told that a deputation of soldiers wished to speak to him. He ordered them to be introduced, when their spokesman craved permission to be allowed to transport the big guns on the shoulders of their gunners. Astounded, the General at first demurred, when an old non-commissioned officer turned round, and said, 'Do not hinder us, little father; we are going to the rescue of our brothers, and somehow we will get through.' 'And,' added Raiewski when he related the story himself to my father, 'they did get through.'

This perfectly true episode, of a struggle which was full of episodes just as heroic, explains the profound disappointment which seized the whole army when it found that after all it was not to get what it had fought for. When, from San Stefano, the minarets of St. Sophia were seen, and the troops realised that they would not enter the ancient church, which a tradition, preciously preserved and handed over from father to son, had taught them would one day become once more the principal temple of the Orthodox faith, they lost every confidence in their sovereign, as well as every affection for him. They made him personally responsible for this ruin of their fondest hopes, and at the same time they lost their faith in their own selves and their own valour. Nihilism and anarchism became a possibility from that day, when the legend, which a whole nation had lived and been fed upon, was proved to have been but a legend after all. It would have been preferable to sacrifice

many of the advantages which Russia ultimately obtained, in order to have secured to the Russian army the entry, if only for a few days, into Constantinople.

Amidst the general discontent and national disappointment, the Treaty of San Stefano was signed, and at once disputed by the British Cabinet. Anxious days followed, which resulted in the calling together of the Berlin Congress.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Double Royal Wedding — Prince Bismarck does not Dance — Hödel's Attempt on the Emperor William's Life — Nobiling's Crime — Days of Suspense — The Regency — Assembling of the Berlin Congress — Lord Beaconsfield — Other Figures at the Congress — The Congress itself a Farce.

The year 1878, however sad it was for Russia, opened brightly at the German Court. In February the double marriage of the Crown Prince and Crown Princess's eldest daughter, Princess Charlotte, with Prince Bernard of Saxe-Meiningen, and that of Princess Elizabeth, the second daughter of Prince and Princess Frederick Charles, with the Hereditary Grand Duke of Oldenburg, took place. The two ceremonies were celebrated the same day, amidst all the pomp which generally accompanies the nuptials of Prussian princesses, in the chapel of the old castle, and were witnessed by innumerable relations of both brides, amongst whom came foremost the King and Queen of the Belgians, and the Duke of Connaught, who, as I believe, became then acquainted with his present wife, who was making her *début* into society on this occasion of her sister's wedding. At all events it was almost immediately afterwards that their betrothal was made public.

These two weddings, before they were cele-

brated, had been made the object of as much gossip as Berlin alone could bring forth. Speculations were rife as to whether both brides would wear the diamond crown in which all Royal *fiancées* were married. As there existed only one of them, one wondered how things would be managed. It turned out that a second crown was made specially for the occasion, which set people's tongues quiet. But every small detail connected with the event was eagerly discussed; among others the question whether Prince Bismarck would appear and execute the ceremony called *Fackel tanz*, which consists of all the ministers of the Crown walking with lighted torches before every newly married Royal couple, while they dance a solemn polonaise with the other members of the family. The Chancellor disappointed expectations, for he did not appear at all, excusing himself, under the formal pretext of ill-health.

I shall never forget this wedding-day; I wonder even now how I managed to survive its fatigue. I was in a delicate state of health, and we stood on our feet for five solid hours, without the possibility of sitting down even for a second. It is wonderful what youth can do, and can stand, when it amuses itself—though I did not amuse myself on the particular occasion to which I refer.

A few days later, Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria paid a visit at the Imperial Court. A ball was given in his honour, and he was made much of. No one could have ever surmised the terrible fate which was to overtake

him so soon; but it was impossible not to be struck with a certain mournful, *moqueur* expression in his eyes, and the sadness of a smile which was nevertheless wonderful, by the change it brought into a face which otherwise bore a stern, almost hard look. The young Archduke was considered one of the cleverest men in his generation, and great as well as justifiable hopes were reposed in him. He was supposed to be gifted with a strong intellect and a firm will. His future was already largely mapped out by friends and foes alike, and a great career was prophesied for him. One wondered how he would get on with Prince William of Prussia, with whom a great friendship united him, when they should find themselves on the two greatest thrones in Europe. No one dreamed of the catastrophe, by which the heir of all the Hapsburgs would lose his life, and disappear from the world, leaving behind him an impenetrable mystery.

In May, town began as usual to get empty, though rumours of an impending congress were daily becoming more frequent. The Empress left as usual for Coblenz, and the Grand Duchess of Baden arrived to spend part of the time of her mother's absence with the Emperor. She was driving with him, when a young man called Hödel fired at the old sovereign. The indignation was intense, but no one thought of connecting this act with anything but the mad attempt of an illiterate youth, corrupted by anarchist books and bad companions, The Grand Duchess of Baden,

whom I went to see a few days after the event, when speaking about it, said the King had remained extraordinarily calm, and had been more concerned about her, than about the danger he had run himself. Messages of congratulation poured down upon him, of course, but in a very short time the event dropped out of people's minds, and ceased to form a subject of conversation.

On Sunday, the 2nd of June, I was reading after lunch, when my husband burst into my room saythat our coachman had brought him the news that the Emperor had been assassinated. Though we did not quite believe the story, yet we started at once for the palace. We found the principal street, Unter den Linden, already crowded with a mass of people, whom a few policemen were in vain trying to keep quiet. My husband made himself known, and we succeeded in forcing our way through the crowd into the palace by a back door. We found the whole place in commotion; no one seemed even to know whether the Emperor was alive or dead. He had been struck with about a hundred small lead shots, and had fallen back in his carriage in a state of collapse almost immediately. His Jäger got down from the box, and seating himself beside him, held him up in his arms whilst the carriage was driven back to the palace in all haste. Being Sunday no doctor could be found, and it was at last quite by chance that a medical man, who was passing through the street, heard what had happened and volunteered his services. This was quite providential, for it

is certain that, had the hæmorrhage not been stopped by him, the Emperor's life could not have been saved. As it was, he had lost already so much blood that for twenty-four hours we all expected the worst. No member of his family was in town. The Crown Prince, with his wife and children, was in England, whither he had gone for a long stay, with the intention of not returning to Berlin until after the deliberations of the Congress were over. Telegrams were, of course, at once dispatched to him, as well as to the Empress and the Grand Duchess of Baden, but for over twenty-four hours the old Kaiser remained absolutely alone. He soon recovered his presence of mind, and on his own initiative ordered General von Albedyll, the head of the Military Cabinet, to prepare an order conferring the Regency upon the Crown Prince. But the Crown Prince was away, and in the meanwhile, pending his return, everything which occurred added to the general confusion.

When we left the palace, about four o'clock in the afternoon, we did so under the impression that a very few hours would see the end. In the evening we walked there once more. It was a lovely summer night, and the park which we had to cross looked its best. The streets were absolutely packed with people, and one could hardly find one's way through them. Not a carriage was to be seen or heard, and this human barrier stopped at a point called the Netherlands Palace, from the name of its owner, Prince Frederick of the Netherlands. It was situated next to the King's residence, and

the vast space which extended from its gates to the Opera House on the other side was absolutely empty and deserted, kept so by the police in order to ensure quiet to the wounded monarch. In front of his windows the equestrian statue of Frederick the Great, by Rauch, appeared almost weird in the moonlight, the sole inhabitant of the deserted square which we were all used to see lively with people. The grief was general. Few persons had hopes that the Emperor would recover, and all began to turn their eyes towards the heir to the throne, who, with his wife, was hurrying back to what every one expected would be the death-bed of his father. Speculations as to the consequences which the change of reign involved were very busy, and a general feeling of uneasiness prevailed at the thought that it was taking place under such grave circumstances, and at such a critical period in European politics. At the Russian Embassy consternation reigned supreme, and wild telegrams were exchanged between St. Petersburg and Berlin. The man in the street was shaking his head, the army was undecided as to what it had to expect or to hope from the new ruler. In the palace, servants and attendants were weeping; the night passed away, anxious, laden with electricity, as such nights generally are. In the morning we heard better reports, and confidence began slowly to come back. If the worst had not happened in the first twenty-four hours, it could be hoped that it might yet be averted. At ten o'clock in the morning the

Empress and her daughter, the Grand Duchess of Baden, who had only left Berlin a few days before the catastrophe, returned to the capital, and were greeted by a sympathetic and respectful crowd. But the interest was not concentrated in these two women; it lay with the Prince, who was awaited with impatience by all, and who was coming back to the country as its Regent, previous, as every one thought, to becoming its sovereign.

The Crown Prince and Princess had been on a visit to the late Lord Salisbury at Hatfield House, when the news reached them. They started at once for Berlin, and on the very same evening of his arrival, the Crown Prince assumed the Regency which he was to exercise for six months, but he found it no easy task, as he soon saw, when the prospects of the Emperor's recovery became more certain, that he would be allowed very little authority beyond that of signing State documents. He was not permitted to have his say in questions of external politics, and upon all others he found himself cramped by rules, procedures, and traditions which it was impossible for him to break through. Those months, when he exercised in appearance a power which in reality he did not possess, must have been trying ones for him, but profound respect for his father prevented him from complaining.

It was amidst this general uncertainty that the Congress opened its deliberations in Berlin on June 13th, and, of course, it was watched with the greatest interest by the whole of the civilised world.

The most prominent statesmen of the day arrived in the German capital, and since the Congress of Vienna such an assemblage of distinguished personages had never been seen anywhere. First and foremost among them was the English Premier, the Earl of Beaconsfield.

I had, of course, against Disraeli the prejudices which I was bound to have as a Russian; he appeared to my eyes as the incarnation of everything that was bad, evil, and destructive. I detested him as a parvenu, and as the man who had humiliated and defied my country. But when I met him my prejudices melted away like snow in the sunshine. A more fascinating personage than the late Lord Beaconsfield has never existed. When one met him, one understood at once his successes, and the reason for them; he had in him that great charm which only people possessed with great confidence in themselves can attain to. He absolutely believed in his own power of doing what he wanted, and at the time he wanted. Lord Beaconsfield, as a man of the world, has had no equal; his conversation was a never-ending source of delight to his listeners. He had a dry way of saying the most funny things which it was impossible to resist, and, knowing the world as he did, he never committed the fault of saying the wrong thing, or relating the wrong anecdote in the wrong place. He had studied princes as well as women, and was aware that they can swallow an unlimited amount of flattery, if distributed with the necessary tact. He liked to contradict people

in order to give them the pleasure of thinking they had converted him to their own point of view. One day a lady, having reminded him of a discussion they had had together, added, 'I believe still I was right.' 'My dear lady,' replied the Earl, 'you could never be anything else.'

Lord Beaconsfield liked what were called '*Coups d'Etat.*' I don't think he ever enjoyed anything so much as when the thunderclap of his secret agreements with Russia about Batoum, and with Turkey about Cyprus, was made public. I remember him well on that evening at a party of Countess Karolyi's, the Austrian Ambassadress. People were either indignant or furious, and every eye in the room was directed towards the statesman who had so completely hoodwinked everybody. He was walking along very quietly, with his sphinx-like countenance, and an eager, searching look upon his face. I asked him what he was thinking of. 'I am not thinking,' he replied; 'I am enjoying myself. I hope you are doing the same?' he added hastily, as if afraid he had said too much.

The brilliancy of Lord Beaconsfield naturally threw his two colleagues somewhat in the shade. Lord Salisbury had not yet risen to the great position which became his later on. He went about generally silent, a quick observer, and a most charming, amiable man. His wife came to join him later on for a few days, and it was then that began between us the relations which afterwards brought me several times to Hatfield House.

With Lord Beaconsfield, too, I struck up a

friendship, which resulted later on in the exchange of a few letters. He made me a curious prediction as to my future, which, in part, has become true, and one of his letters to me refers to this subject.

Count Andrassy was another prominent personage at the Congress. A brilliant apparition in his Hungarian uniform, he arrived surrounded with all the halo of a man who had become Prime Minister of the sovereign by whom he had been sentenced to death. There was much that was dashing in him, but I do not think that he could have been called a great statesman, though he certainly was a great politician—greater, perhaps, than Lord Beaconsfield himself, but without the happy adaptability of the latter. He was marvellous in getting over a momentary difficulty, and in making use of momentary advantages. I question whether he had that large glance which sees across the advantages of the hour those of the future. His eyesight was narrow, though his look-out extended perhaps far ahead of that of those with whom he had to deal.

Russia played a sorry part at the Congress. Old Prince Gortchakoff had insisted upon attending it, and his immense vanity, joined to the natural weakness of a man far advanced in the eighties, could not but place him at a disadvantage among the clever men with whom he was surrounded. His colleague, Count Schouwaloff, was smarting under the sense of his failure in having correctly judged of the attitude of the British Government. He vaguely felt he had been '*roulé*,' to use a French

expression, and that his reward would be the indignation of his whole country. A brilliant man, he unfortunately made the mistake of thinking that his bright wit would be sufficient to check the ambitions of Lord Beaconsfield. He imagined that by getting England to consent to the annexation of Batoum by Russia he had achieved a great success, while in reality he had only been checkmated by the astute Hebrew with whom he had had to deal. The knowledge of this, once he had realised it, weighed upon his spirits, and prevented him from being as active as he would have shown himself in other circumstances ; he knew but too well that everything he did would be regarded with suspicion by his countrymen, and that he was doomed to sink into obscurity as soon as the Congress was over. The Turkish plenipotentiaries were, of course, at a disadvantage. It must be added that none of them, with the exception of Mahmoud Pacha, had any idea of asserting themselves, and they arrived in Berlin resigned beforehand to all that England would decide concerning their fate. Italy was represented by Count Corti, an amiable little man, with whom I also struck up a great friendship, and remained in correspondence to the time of his death. He entertained us at his house at Constantinople, where he was appointed Ambassador immediately after the Congress, and pleasant are the recollections I have carried away with me, from the hours spent under his hospitable roof.

The Congress lasted a month. However much

it occupied people's minds outside of Berlin, I am bound to confess that the death of the young Queen of Spain, the first consort of Alfonso XII., interested German Society more than the conferences on which the fate of the world depended. To tell the truth, the results of the Congress had been discounted from the day that the secret agreements between Russia and England, and England and Turkey, had been disclosed to the world, and people were only eager to see the whole farce end. Bismarck himself desired it, as he felt he had, in spite of the Crown Prince's English sympathies, a better chance of managing him than the old Emperor. He feared the personal influence of Alexander II. over his uncle, as well as the remembrances of the old associations of his childhood and youth, which were always so powerful with William I. Summer was advancing, every one was anxious to leave the hot and close atmosphere of Berlin for green fields and pastures new, and the English plenipotentiaries were anxious to return to London before Parliament rose for the summer recess. Everything conspired to shorten the deliberations of the Congress, and no one was sorry when it actually came to an end. It had been a humiliation all round, except for England, and for the man who directed its policy.

A curious feature of the Congress was the quantity of various and interesting people who crowded to Berlin during its deliberations, to begin with the Armenian Patriarch, and to end with M. de Blowitz of *Times* fame.

M. DE BLOWITZ

This famous journalist was almost as conspicuous as Lord Beaconsfield himself. He enjoyed his notoriety even more than did the English statesman, and I think was firmly persuaded that he, and he alone, held the fate of Europe in his hands. It was most amusing to watch him, and observe the art with which he contrived to be always there when something important was discussed. No one liked him and not a few feared him; but though perfectly well aware of the feelings he inspired, his only aim being to obtain information, he walked along serenely indifferent to insults or flatteries, with one and one only end in view, that of keeping his paper well informed as to what was going on.

It was a kaleidoscope, where nationalities, convictions, men, manners, ambitions, hopes, and disappointments were crowded. Those who had nothing to do with the subjects which were discussed in the old Radziwill Palace, came nevertheless to the Prussian capital, partly from curiosity, partly from the desire to be able to say that they had been present at one of the most remarkable events of the century. Though the Congress did not dance, like its Viennese predecessor, it contrived to amuse itself sufficiently well. The only member of it who was never seen anywhere was, of course, Prince Bismarck, who on this memorable occasion, as on all others, remained faithful to his principle of not showing himself.

In the solitude of his room he was meditating

on the consequences of the treaty that had been elaborated under his sanction, but without his approval. He already guessed that one of its consequences would be the rupture of that alliance between the three Emperors, from which so much had been expected. He foresaw that the Eastern question, instead of being settled, would be left open for many years to come. But Bismarck could not foresee, genius though he was, the complications which a change of sovereigns, in Russia as well as in Germany, might mean. He reckoned with events, as he said himself at that time to one of his confidants, 'but it was impossible to reckon with actions of individuals.'

Thus ended the Berlin Congress, that time of merry days and mournful memories. It had been short-lived, full of events, over-rated as to its consequences, and under-estimated as to its value. It did not bring peace, but only rest to the world, and it sowed the seeds of many future animosities, and many misunderstandings. Every one breathed more freely when it was over, and Berlin settled once more to its summer quietude. In the meanwhile, the old Emperor was gradually getting well, and the Crown Prince struggling with the intricacies of an impossible position, out of which he was to come with diminished authority and impaired prestige.

CHAPTER IX.

The King's Recovery—Marriage of Prince Henry of the Netherlands—The Difficult Position of the Regent—Emperor William's Return to Berlin—Enthusiasm at the Opera—The Crown Prince and Anti-Socialist Legislation—Herr Bebel—Death of the Princess Alice and of Prince Waldemar—The White Lady—The Emperor's Golden Wedding.

THE treaty signed, and peace once more restored to the world, people began to settle down again to their usual life. The Crown Prince and Princess remained at Potsdam, and in August the Emperor was pronounced to be sufficiently well to go to Teplitz, in Bohemia, to undergo a cure after his illness. He had made a wonderful recovery, and all danger that the grave illness he had gone through, would leave standing traces on his health had gone by. The Empress remained with him the greater part of the summer, but it was very much commented upon, that she refused to appear before the public in her official capacity, so long as her son was at the head of the affairs of State, never even receiving the members of the Congress. The Regent, on his part, was not lavish in his hospitality, for beyond an official dinner, which was given by him in the King's name, to the different delegates, he abstained from any social demonstrations, and lived in great retirement.

In August the eldest daughter of Prince and Princess Frederick Charles, the Princess Marie, was married at Potsdam to the brother of the King of the Netherlands, Prince Henry. He was some forty years older than his bride, and it was well known that it was only his great position and immense riches, which had decided the Princess to marry him. One may, therefore, imagine the embarrassment of the guests at the wedding ceremony, when the clergyman who performed it recommended to the bride, in his sermon, to have a good heart, and to try and fulfil her duties, no matter how difficult she might find them. If she found them hard, the trial did not last long; for less than six months after his marriage Prince Henry died, leaving his widow one of the richest princesses in Europe. She married again, a few years later, Prince Albert of Saxe-Altenburg, and died in childbirth not long afterwards.

As summer went on, one began to wonder what would be the position of the Crown Prince when the Emperor once more took up the reins of government. No one thought for a moment that he would be excluded from affairs of the State, as had been the case until then. Various rumours circulated, and it was even said that a special post of Lieutenant of the Emperor would be created for his heir. Prince Bismarck, however, when questioned on the subject, replied that he did not see the reason why a new office should be created, and that the Emperor having ruled wisely in the past, would probably do the

same in the future. The Crown Prince himself had no wish to be treated as the fifth wheel of a coach, and frankly owned he would rather have no authority at all, than only its semblance. I don't think that the Princess quite agreed with him. She was full of ambitions, and the sorrows which later overshadowed her life, and which, had she known it, were at the very time I am writing of, hovering over her head, had not yet struck her. She had all the impatience of youth, and had not learned the bitter lesson of patience, acquired through grief and trial. She still hoped, and she did not yet fear. Life, in spite of its usual vicissitudes, had remained for her, in certain things, an unread book. When, at last, she had to take it up in her hands, and study its pages, the lesson, though learned with the heroism she showed in all the crises of her existence, was the more bitter that it was so little expected.

It was early in December when the Emperor returned to Berlin. The whole town put on its holiday array, and great were the preparations and ovations with which he was greeted. We went quite early in the morning to the palace of old Count Redern, on the Pariser Platz, from which an excellent view was obtained of the Brandenburg Gate, through which the sovereign had to pass. The streets were lined with troops, and extraordinary precautions had been taken to ensure the old monarch's safety. A compact crowd filled the streets, of course, and, when the Royal carriage appeared, great and many were the manifestations

of joy of the people. There was, however, a certain restraint observable, which spoiled the character and spontaneity of the reception, and which was due to the want of tact of the police authorities. They were so terrified lest there should be another attack on the Emperor, that it was sufficient for a person to wave a pocket-handkerchief, to excite suspicion.

The same evening, however, witnessed a very different scene. Quite by chance, for no one thought the King would venture into a theatre on that first night of his return, we happened to be at the Opera. The performance had hardly begun, when the doors of the small box in which the Royal family used to sit on ordinary occasions opened, and the King himself entered, and quietly advanced to his usual seat. With one spontaneous movement the whole house rose to its feet, and a manifestation, the like of which I am sure I shall never witness again, took place. The crowd simply yelled, without stopping, for something like a quarter of an hour; women frantically waved their handkerchiefs, their shawls, everything they could find or lay their hands upon. Men threw their hats and their caps in the air; one wild acclamation filled the whole of the building. The Emperor came to the front of the box, and for a few moments stood quite still, looking at the excited mass of humanity acclaiming him. He made a sign with his hand as if he wished to speak; but the shouts became louder and louder, until at last, as if unable to bear it any longer, he withdrew to

the back of the box; but as he did so, one could see his hand with its white glove pass over his cheek, as if he wiped away a tear.

The next day appeared in all the papers a letter of thanks addressed to the Crown Prince for the exemplary way he had fulfilled the onerous duties of Regent. Nothing more; not the slightest allusion to the possibility of a less dependent position being granted to the man who, for six eventful months, had borne the burden of the State amidst all kind of difficulties—difficulties of which the new situation created for the Socialist party by the measures taken against it was not the least.

It was after the first attempt against the life of William I. that Prince Bismarck had presented to the Imperial Parliament a Bill restricting the activity of the Socialist party, and putting a stop to the propagation of its principles. It had been rejected by the Assembly, much to his dissatisfaction, principally on account of the opposition of the Catholic party. When the Emperor was wounded, the first thing Bismarck submitted to the Regent was the necessity of dissolving the Reichstag, and proceeding to new elections. The plan did not appeal to the Prince; he did not like the idea of trading (so to say) on the personal affection his father inspired in his subjects, in order to win from their indignation measures which he knew were repugnant to their feelings. But when he suggested something like that to the Chancellor, he was met with allusions to the deplorable impression which

would be produced abroad, if he did not take every possible measure to avenge his father. Placed thus, between his duty, or what he was told was his duty, and his sense of right and wrong, the Prince had no resource but to submit to the iron hand which ruled him as much as it did Prussia. The Reichstag was dissolved, and the new elections took place under the influence produced by the horror inspired by the odious attempt of June 2nd. They showed a considerable decrease of Socialist votes, but, as the leaders of the party were returned, the fierceness of the debates which accompanied the introduction of the Bill was not diminished, and it was, on the contrary, fought with a ferocity which was the more earnest because it knew itself to be powerless.

During the three days which were occupied with the deliberations of the different clauses of the new law, which was to weigh so heavily on the Socialist party afterwards, I never left the tribune from which ladies were allowed to hear the debates. These were feverishly listened to, by all those who could get access to the House. They were opened by the Chancellor himself, who spoke for over an hour, and to whom Bebel (the great Socialist leader) replied in a speech which deserved to go down to posterity as an example of eloquence. Never were such impassioned accents heard within the walls of the old building. Every one felt moved by the strange persuasiveness with which this remarkable man appealed to the sense of justice and humanity of the whole German nation, adjuring it

not to make outcasts of thousands of its children. In listening to those savage accents one seemed to hear made vocal the writing on the wall which, amidst the splendours of the Persian King's supper, appeared to remind him that 'for all these things he would be brought into judgment.' It is impossible not to be moved by an argument when it comes from the lips of Bebel: he speaks of poverty, of misery, of vice, as a man who has known and suffered from these things; he knows how to excite his listeners' pity, not for imaginary facts, but for painful and sad truths; he knows how to make them touch with their finger all the evils of which he speaks to them. On the particular occasion to which I refer, he surpassed himself; but his efforts were doomed before they were made, and the obnoxious Bill passed, though with a smaller majority than Bismarck had counted upon. It was curious to watch the House as each deputy was called by name, by the President, in order to reckon his vote. As the words 'Yes' or 'No' fell from each member's lips, remarks were made, often so loud as to drown the voice of the next speaker.

The Catholics, for once, did not vote on strict party lines, Windthorst having wisely allowed them to use their personal convictions in this matter. Some of them abstained from recording their votes; others, like Count Chamaré, the brother-in-law of Count Deym, late Austrian Ambassador at the Court of St. James, bravely opposed the measure, to the great scandal of the Royal family, with whom

his wife was a great favourite. The Emperor, when told of this, was so disgusted that he struck off the Count and Countess's names from the list of those admitted to Court, which of course did not encourage others to follow their example.

The law passed, however, as I have already said, and I do not know whether the person who was the most sorry for it was not the Crown Prince, who certainly, had he been sole master, would never have granted his assent to a measure of the kind.

I have said that sorrow was hovering around the Crown Princess. Just as she was trying to get over her disappointment about the unfair way in which she considered her husband had been treated, she heard, to her dismay, of her sister's, the Grand Duchess of Hesse's, illness. A few days passed, and with them the fair, useful life of the Princess Alice. For a moment the Crown Princess remained stunned by the blow. It was the most bitter grief she had yet experienced; in her sister she lost not only the companion, the friend of her young days, but also the guide, the master to whom she used to turn in every difficulty of her life, and whose calm, clear judgment, by its contrast to the elder sister's impetuosity, helped her often to surmount the disappointments she felt, with an acuteness they did not always deserve. With the Grand Duchess of Hesse were buried not only the happy hours of the future German Empress, but also much that was tender in her nature, and a great deal of what was useful. All her interest in various pursuits which she had shared with the dear com-

panion that been taken away from her was gone; her life was completely changed on that fatal 14th of December, and the wound then inflicted was never cured, nor even healed.

The blow, as is so often the case, was not to be an isolated one. In March the Crown Prince and Princess went to Windsor, to be present at the Duke of Connaught's marriage with Princess Margaret of Prussia, returning to Berlin for the Emperor's birthday on the 22nd of March. A State concert was given, as usual, on that day at the castle, at which concert I saw the Princess for the first time since her return from England. She seemed very unhappy still, and her beautiful eyes were beginning to have that hunted look, which hardly left them afterwards. But she tried to be cheerful, and spoke of her brother's wedding, and the pleasure it had been to her to be able to be present at it. Three days later we were startled to hear that young Prince Waldemar, the youngest son of the heir to the throne, had died suddenly from diphtheria, after only a few hours' illness. It is needless to say that all our sympathies went out to the bereaved father and mother. The latter was absolutely broken-hearted. Those two sorrows, coming as they did, one on the top of the other, would have been sufficient to crush any woman. They did something more than crush the unfortunate Crown Princess; they killed her—with that kind of death to which the Empress Elizabeth of Austria referred when she said, 'There is in every human life a moment when one inwardly

dies.' The Crown Princess was never the same after that winter, which transformed her into a Mater Dolorosa, and that childlike capacity for enjoyment, which had constituted one of her principal charms, left her, never to return.

This death of Prince Waldemar reminds me of a curious incident which was widely commented upon in Berlin at the time it occurred. It must be known to my readers that a certain White Lady is supposed to haunt the halls of the old castle in Berlin, and to appear whenever there is going to be a death in the family of the Hohenzollerns. A few days before the demise of Prince Waldemar, before, in fact, he was taken ill, a gentleman I knew very well, Count Kleist, the brother of the Princess Pless, asked me, at an entertainment of some kind where we met, whether I had heard that the White Lady had been seen in the castle. We both laughed a little over the superstition, but the next day the rumour had gone round the whole of society, and the unexpected end of the young Prince lent it a rather uncanny significance. It is the only time I have heard of a ghost, whose mission in life is to announce a death in a family, appearing, or being reported to have appeared, before the fact actually took place, and at a time when it could not be suspected of being about to occur.

The Crown Princess left Berlin almost immediately after her son's funeral. She was not allowed, however, to mourn him for a long time, as the celebration of the Emperor's golden wedding recalled her to the capital early in the following June.

I think that all the Royalties which Germany could boast of, found themselves in Berlin for this important anniversary in its first Emperor's life. He rather dreaded the associations connected with it, but the Empress Augusta could not dissimulate her joy, and made, as well as caused to be made, the most elaborate preparations for the great event. Her dress was a marvel of elegance, all of cloth of gold, embroidered with diamonds, and she covered her head with a gold-spangled veil, which curiously, and it must be added most inharmoniously, contrasted with the tint of her wig. She was already beginning at that time to suffer from the illness which at last confined her, an incurable cripple, to her chair; but she called into requisition all the energy of her nature to stand up and show herself a real Queen, surrounded with all the pomp and attributes of royalty, and when she appeared in the old chapel of the castle, led by her consort, she looked wonderfully young for her age.

The ceremony lasted a long time—too long both for the actors in it with their eighty years, and for the assistants, who were, of course, denied the luxury of seats. I remember that, hearing suddenly an exclamation of impatience, I turned round, and to my intense surprise saw Prince Bismarck standing behind me. He smiled on noticing my astonishment, and made an excuse of some sort for his impatience, upon which we started a conversation, which, I am sorry to say, lasted the whole time of the sermon, and, I believe, scandalised all our neighbours.

It was during the festivities which followed upon the celebration of this golden wedding that the Court of Prussia was surprised by the application of the new rules of precedence which had been elaborated by the Empress and the Chief Master of Ceremonies, Count Stillfried. They produced a perfect revolution, especially among the junior members of princely families, who found themselves excluded from some of the honours awarded to the heads of their houses. In reality, there was nothing offensive in these new rules, which were very sensible on some points, but people would not look upon the fact in that simple way, and I remember my husband's indignation when he found we were only invited to the White Hall of the castle, and not to the chapel, on the day of the golden wedding. He sent back our invitation, to my intense disgust, for I had had a new gown made for the occasion, and did not care in the least where I wore it, provided I was given the opportunity to put it on my back. Besides, I thought it terribly unkind towards the old Emperor, who had always been so good to us. However, he set the matter straight himself when he heard of this tempest in a glass of water, and gave orders that we were to be asked to the chapel, orders which procured an airing to my new frock, and the advantage of a conversation with Prince Bismarck to myself.

CHAPTER X.

The Growing Unpopularity of the Czar — His Treatment of the Empress — A Reign of Terror in St. Petersburg — Death of the Empress — The Emperor Marries the Princess Dolgorouki — Assassination of Alexander II. — The Scene at the Death-bed — Alexander III. — Count Ignatiev — I go to Constantinople.

NOBILING'S crime was the first one of a series of acts of the same kind which were attempted in a few months against the different crowned heads of Europe. In Russia these attempts succeeded each other almost without breathing-time, and proved to be of a more daring and desperate character than anywhere else. The Emperor was first fired at one morning, whilst taking his constitutional walk, by a young man called Solowieff, who very quickly paid with his life for the audacity or fanaticism that had armed his hand. When the news became known, every thinking man in Russia felt convinced that the crime would be repeated sooner or later, and sooner than later. The country was in a state of fermentation ever since the war, which, instead of smouldering down, was growing day by day. The unpopularity of the Emperor was steadily increasing among all classes, even among those who up till then had been the staunchest supporters of the throne. The uselessness of a war that had drained all the material

resources of the nation, and saddled it with a burden of debt and disappointment, was made a reproach to the Emperor, who it was said, had not had the courage to make a stand against it, when it had been in his power, nor yet the energy, once it was begun, to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

The Congress of Berlin was generally considered as a national disgrace, and the two great parties which at that time divided Russia, the Panslavists and the Nihilists, vied with each other in their denunciations of the unhappy sovereign. The popularity of the earlier days of his reign had vanished, never to return; Alexander II. was paying the penalty of having attempted to do too much, and to do it too quickly. His was essentially a resentful nature. He could not bring himself to forgive his subjects for not understanding his good intentions towards them, and as the misunderstanding between the people and their ruler grew deeper and deeper, he became more sullen, more unforgiving. His days were one constant fear; fear of assassination, of revolution; fear of his surroundings, of his family, of everything, and every one with whom he had to deal. His home life also was not a happy one. His children could not forgive him for his connection with the Princess Dolgorouki, later Princess Youriewski. His wife, after having endured with exemplary patience, his neglect and numerous infidelities, had come to regard him as a stranger, and relations between them were, if not exactly hostile, at least cool. She never complained, but

made her very delicate health a pretext for living a more and more retired life. She affected absolute ignorance of her husband's goings on, and even when the Princess Dolgorouki was given rooms at the Winter Palace, over those of the Empress, who could hear the children of her rival run and play above her head, she never betrayed by a sign or a word, that she was aware of what was taking place.

Society was not so indulgent; the Emperor soon came to be shunned by its leaders, and looked upon as a confirmed sinner by the *dévotes*, of whom St. Petersburg counts so many. The Government of the country was drifting for want of a strong hand to hold it in check, and different ambitions began to pull the nation as well as society in many conflicting directions.

The public began to look towards the heir to the throne, whose popularity increased as his father's was waning. The Grand Duchess Dagmar, his wife, had been a favourite in Russian society almost from the first day she had entered it. Her lovely eyes and sweet smile, had done more than anything else to reconcile Russia to many otherwise objectionable things. Her husband, too, had made himself popular during those dark days of the war, when he showed himself so true to his duty, and so careful for his soldiers' comforts and welfare. I really believe, and I am not the only one that does so, that had a kind Providence removed Alexander II., on the morrow of the war, Nihilism would never have spread in the way it did, or at

least would not have been sympathised with by so many people. It proceeded more from dislike of a particular sovereign, than from hatred of the monarchical system.

Solowieff's attempt was followed in quick succession by the blowing up of an Imperial train near Moscow, and by the famous explosion in the Winter Palace, by which the whole of the Imperial family might have lost their lives, but for the lucky accident of Prince Alexander of Hesse having been late for dinner. Assassinations of private individuals, such as that of General Mezentsoff, the head of the secret police, only added to the general consternation, one may almost call it panic, which seized the whole of society, in Russia, during these eventful years of 1879–1881. I remember having arrived in St. Petersburg on one of my yearly visits to my father in autumn, 1879, just after the murder of General Mezentsoff; indignation, though very general, had no shade of astonishment in it, and every one seemed agreed that the event could never have happened had the sovereign been more popular. People looked upon every Nihilist crime as a consequence of the false comprehension Alexander II. had of his duties and responsibilities.

The fact is that the unfortunate Emperor had survived himself. People were weary of him; his reign had begun in such a burst of enthusiasm, had been hailed with such hopes, that it was bound to become a burden to all those who had prophesied that it would be one of the greatest in Russian history.

From the moment people realised that their desires could never be fulfilled, the Emperor was doomed. He had, sooner or later, to fall a victim to the hopes he had raised, without understanding whither his reforms were going to lead the Russian people. His attempt to bring his country to a level with the other European ones, was bound to end in disaster, for at heart he had never intended to grant to his people the liberties which are the privileges of nations constitutionally governed. He had wished to impress the world with his Liberal opinions and ideas. It was a hopeless attempt; because at heart he was not a Liberal, but only had wished to appear as such, whilst in reality governing with an absolutism beside which his father's, tempered as it always had been by a vast intelligence, was but child's play. The difference between the two men lay in the fact that Nicholas I. was by nature a clever man, whilst his son was only given the appearance of being such, by a very clever education.

I remember very well those autumn weeks in St. Petersburg, in that year, so eventful in the history of the country. Between the wounds caused by the war, which were still bleeding, and the fear of what the future held in store, a general uneasiness prevailed. A system of terror reigned; squadrons of Cossacks went about patrolling the streets of the town, and though conversations were very guarded, yet the impression was there that a change of some kind was necessary, in order to avoid still greater catastrophes than those already

experienced. One felt the reign had been a failure, yet one did not dare to say so, and, at heart, the general public was wishing and hoping for some solution of the difficulties of the general situation, the best of which appeared to be a change of sovereign. My father, who was always ready to relate anecdotes of his past life at the side of Nicholas I., told me at that time, a curious story about a prediction made by that monarch a few days before his death, when he already knew that his hours were numbered. It was to the effect that his son, should he launch into the reforms he projected, would not die in his bed, but perish under the knife or ball of an assassin. The event proved how well that Emperor understood his country and his people.

In 1880, at the end of June, the Empress Marie Alexandrowna died, almost suddenly, but after an illness which had extended over a series of years. The last time she had appeared in public had been at the celebration of the jubilee of twenty-five years' reign of her husband, and then it had only been for a few minutes. Six weeks after she had passed away, the Emperor married his former mistress, the Princess Catherine Dolgorouki, to whom was awarded the title of Princess Youriewski, and Serene Highness. Her children also became Serene Highnesses, and very soon after the union rumours went round that the new consort of the sovereign was going to be publicly recognised as such, and crowned solemnly at Moscow. Whether this rumour, which I believe was well founded,

would have become an accomplished fact or not, I cannot, of course, tell, but it is certain that if it did not lead to the catastrophe of March 13th, it mitigated a good deal of the horror which followed upon its execution.

The Princess Youriewski, whose marriage was accompanied by the curious circumstance that the Emperor, who generally wore uniform, elected to be dressed in plain evening clothes for the celebration of it, was credited with Liberal ideas and with a determination to endow Russia with a Constitution. She was a great friend of Count Loris Melikoff, who at that time was, in virtue of the special powers granted to him, a veritable dictator. Count Loris was an Armenian, endowed with all the cunning and astuteness of his race; and it is certain that the granting of a Constitution had been decided upon by the Emperor, his wife, and Count Loris. The document was prepared and signed, and was to be made public on the declaration of the sovereign's marriage. In the Imperial family consternation reigned supreme, the more so that the heir to the throne and his wife were in a sort of disgrace owing to the attitude they had adopted towards their father's wife. Three days before the Emperor's murder he had summoned his daughter-in-law to his presence, and bitterly reproached her for a sledge drive she had taken in company with a man who was destined to become in time the most powerful personage in Russia, General Tcherewine, then under-secretary for home affairs. He had always been among

the intimate friends of the Grand Duke and his wife, and the Emperor's anger was absolutely unjustifiable. But he chose to be disagreeable towards his children, and to humiliate them in every possible way. His remarks to the Grand Duchess were as offensive as they could well be, and those he made to the General so very personal and abusive that the latter determined to resign his post at once. He had already written his request to be allowed to return to private life, when the bomb of Ryssakoff put an end to a situation which, at least in regard to the relations between Alexander II. and his children, had become almost unbearable.

On that eventful day, which was to see the change of reign, the Emperor had been warned not to leave the palace. Count Loris had told the Princess Youriewski that he could not answer for her husband's life if he went out, and had begged her to use her influence in order to persuade him to give up the review, which took place, as a rule, every Sunday. Whether the Princess had done so or not, remains a mystery to this day. It is probable she did what she was told, and was not heard or listened to. The Emperor appeared as usual at the review, and, though, it was noticed, he look grave and preoccupied, yet he went through the usual routine without flinching. The review over, he lunched with his cousin, the Grand Duchess Catherine, staying with her until about three o'clock. The road back to the Winter Palace led by a narrow canal, which at that hour

of the day was almost deserted. The Emperor was alone in his carriage, accompanied as usual by an escort of Cossacks. The first bomb that was thrown shattered the carriage, and killed a Cossack. Alexander II., in spite of his coachman's entreaties, insisted upon getting out and seeing to the wounded man. Ryssakoff, in the meantime, had been seized by some policemen that the noise had brought up, and was led before the Emperor, who at that moment was replying to the anxious question of one of the Cossacks as to whether he was hurt, by the words, 'No, thanks be given to God,' which, Ryssakoff hearing, replied to with the remark, 'It is too early yet to thank God.'

At this very instant Mlle. Perowskaya was giving with her handkerchief a signal to another conspirator, who had been waiting with his bomb, in case the first one failed to accomplish its object. Before the few people who surrounded the sovereign had had time to turn round, and gather together their scattered wits, another tremendous explosion took place, and, when the smoke had dissipated itself, the horrified spectators saw Alexander II. on the ground, his cap blown away, and his two legs shattered into a thousand fragments. With the greatest difficulty they lifted him up, and placed him in the first sledge that could be found, that of a police official. The Grand Duke Michael, who had arrived upon the scene at this juncture, could just understand his brother's words, 'Take me back to the palace;

I wish to die there.' An officer of the Chevaliers Gardes, Count Hendrikoff, who was passing at that moment in the street, helped to settle the dying monarch in the uncomfortable conveyance, which was the only one at hand, and put his own cap upon the Emperor's head. The gloomy *cortège* was driven back to the Winter Palace, and a long trail of blood marked its passage. Enduring probably agonies, the ruler of eighty millions of people was carried to his bed. No doctor could be found, and by the time medical aid was forthcoming, the unfortunate sovereign had passed into a stage where nothing could be done. A few short minutes saw the end.

Whilst his father was being butchered in the streets of his capital, the heir to the throne and his wife had lunched as usual with their children, and immediate *entourage*. The first explosion, which was rather faintly heard, did not excite any uneasiness in their minds. As the Empress Marie Feodorowna told me herself, they thought it was one of the usual guns which are so often fired from the fortress whenever there is any reason to fear the waters of the Newa are rising. The second explosion, however, startled them; and not many minutes elapsed before an officer, riding for dear life, appeared in a cab, and rushing, almost without being announced, into the presence of the Grand Duke, told him what had happened. Without waiting for their own carriage to be got ready, Alexander III. and his wife jumped into the vehicle which had brought the officer, and without being

recognised by the crowd, who had already begun to fill the streets, were driven to the Winter Palace. When they entered it, all was nearly over.

I have a letter from my father, who was there, graphically describing the sight the palace presented; the despair, and, at the same time, the visible satisfaction which some people could not conceal at the turn events had taken. The Imperial family gradually assembled by the bedside of their head. As the Grand Duchess Wladimir told a friend, there was nothing to be seen on it but a red mass, from which a few faint groans were heard to issue. The Princess Youriewski was tearing her hair, and giving way to the utmost despair. Count Loris, gloomy and silent, was probably thinking of the disgrace which he knew but too well was hovering over his head. On the vast square in front of the palace the crowd was growing thicker and thicker, in an attitude which was a mixture of consternation and horror, with an under-current of threat. In the different barracks troops were gathered together, and at half-past five had already taken the oath to the new sovereign, whilst in the corridors and halls, leading to Alexander II.'s apartments, all his military and civil household had assembled, in expectation of the end. At four o'clock the doors of the dead Emperor's bedroom were opened, and his successor came out with the young Empress leaning on his arm. A loud cheer greeted him, to which he imposed silence with an authoritative wave of the hand, and slowly, with

his handkerchief over his eyes, he proceeded to the private chapel, where a short service was celebrated; then, amidst a respectful, and this time silent, crowd, he, who was now Alexander III., drove back, without an escort, in an open sledge to his own palace.

The next morning saw the oath administered to the household, and an innumerable crowd. Of the events that followed, it is not in the limits of this book to speak. Very shortly after the accession of the new Emperor, he promulgated the famous manifesto in which he affirmed solemnly his attachment to the principles of autocracy. This was followed by the resignation of Count Loris and two of his colleagues, and the Emperor, acting under the advice of his former tutor, M. Pobedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod, called Count Ignatiev to the difficult post of Minister of the Interior. This appointment was received with a shout of exasperation by Europe, who took it as an act of defiance, and as a sign that the new sovereign was determined upon a warlike policy in the East, as well as with consternation by a certain section of society in Russia. To the intense surprise, however, of those who had imagined that Count Ignatiev would inaugurate a system of severe autocratic government, he was, on the contrary, the first to propose measures so liberal that, in consequence of them, he was dismissed from office.

In the summer of the year 1880 my eldest son was born, and, at the same time, my husband's

health became indifferent, so that at last the doctors advised him to try a long journey to the East in order to recover his strength. After having left our children with my grandmother we started for Venice, where we spent some time in August, 1881. It was my first glimpse of Italy, and of course I fell instantly under the charm this marvellous country never fails to exercise over all lovers of nature and art. From Venice we went to Corfu. At that time the palace of the Empress of Austria was only in course of construction, but it was easy to understand the fascination which these shores exercised over the romantic mind of Elizabeth of Bavaria. There is something in the shade of the sky, the blue of the waters, the colours of the trees, shrubs, and vegetation which suggests such absolute repose, such calm, such peace, that it is not difficult to imagine it must appeal to every troubled, anxious, or restless soul. Had I my wish I should also like to have a villa at Corfu, if only to be able to spend a few days every year in that earthly paradise.

From Corfu we went to Constantinople, reaching the Dardanelles on the very night on which began the Ramazan. As our ship had stopped waiting for its patent of health to be *visé* and signed, the first gun was fired which announced that the hour for breaking the fast had struck. At the some moment the hills became ablaze with a hundred fires, and the slow, singing voice of the muezzin was heard calling from the minarets of the mosques the faithful to prayer. It was the first time these

accents I was to hear so often later on, resounded to my ears, and even now I feel their charm as potently as I did on that summer evening. The air was soft with that peculiar softness unknown anywhere else; the sky was full of stars, and the moon was spreading its rays over the weird scene. It was one of those perfect moments in life which remain engraved in letters of fire on the mind and in the head, as well as in the heart, and which mark a lull in all the strifes and agitations of existence.

The next morning the splendours of Constantinople burst upon our eyes, as the town slowly rose under the varied lights and shadows of the rising sun; and nothing in the world exceeds the beauty of this spectacle.

As our ship anchored we were met by Count Corti, our old friend of the Congress, who, after a short rest at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, the famous Missiri, so well known to all travellers, took us up to his house on the Bosphorus, at Therapia, where I spent three of what to me certainly were among the happiest weeks in my life.

CHAPTER XI.

Stay at Constantinople — Different Sights — Life on the Bosphorus — Lord and Lady Dufferin — The Corps Diplomatique — Osman and Mukhtar Pacha — Departure for Russia.

I do not know what Constantinople is to-day. In 1881 life on the banks of the Bosphorus was certainly most amusing. All the embassies were scattered for the summer at Therapia or Buyukdere, and a constant interchange of visits between the different members of the diplomatic corps made time pass very pleasantly. The Italian Embassy, as I have said already, was at Therapia, and we were given lovely rooms with a terrace opening on to a garden.

The very day we landed at Constantinople I was taken to the harem of some Turkish official, and met there for the first time Lady Dufferin, then quite young and lovely. It was a curious meeting, for we had never seen each other before, and as there was no one to introduce us to each other we had to make the best of it alone. She also had only just arrived at Constantinople, so it was a new experience for us both, and I think we were both wondering how we should get away from our hostesses, for it is no easy thing to escape from a

Turkish harem when once one is in it. The good ladies expect a visit to last a whole day, not to speak of an afternoon.

Of course, we did all the sights of the Bosphorus, went to the sweet waters of Asia and Europe, rambled in the Bazaar—more wonderful at that time than it is now, and not quite so much invaded with Cook's tourists and Manchester goods; we rode in the forest of Belgrade, were rowed by moonlight in a caique on the Bosphorus, and inspected the old walls and the remains of the famous castle of the Seven Towers. In the evening we either dined out, or went to a dance or entertainment of some kind, or else Count Corti had friends to dine with him at the Embassy. It was an amusing, an interesting life, and at the same time not an idle life by any means, for, besides the wonderful sights one saw every day, nothing could be more interesting than to watch politics in Turkey during the years which followed upon the war.

Of course, we went to see St. Sophia. Also, of course, we were taken to see the famous Treasury, where all the jewels of the Sultan are kept. We went there with the Dufferins, and in consequence were received with all honours, and accorded facilities which we probably would never have obtained had we been sight-seeing on our own account. It was a most curious expedition: an aide-de-camp of the Sultan received us, and at the doors of the old Seraglio a whole regiment of most horrible white eunuchs was

waiting for us. They first took us to the Treasury, where we examined a curious collection of costumes belonging to all the dead and gone Sultans; the display of precious stones on them was something quite marvellous. I remember in particular one dagger of which the handle was composed of one single emerald. It really looked almost like a bit of glass, so huge it was. Then there was a throne all inlaid with turquoises and rubies, and I have already forgotten how many wonderful things.

I tried to start a conversation with the aide-de-camp who was piloting us, and after much trouble and the exhaustion of every language I knew, I found out at last that he understood Russian, and that he was a Tartar of Kazan, who, during the war, had deserted the Russian ranks to join his brethren in religion. Considering that my own property was in that part of the world, it was a most curious thing to meet him. He did not speak much Russian, and the little he did was not sufficient to make him understand the meaning of the words he used, and so, to my intense amusement, when we said good-bye, he turned gravely to me and said, '*Ya was nikodga ne zabudu*,' which means 'I shall never forget you.' Considering he was a Moslem, who are supposed never to make a compliment to a woman, this expression of feeling amused my husband and myself exceedingly.

One of the sights of Constantinople was, of course, the weekly ride of the Sultan to the

mosque to perform his devotions. Formerly a different place of worship was chosen every week, but Abdul Hamid, always afraid for his safety, only went to the little mosque of Bechiktasch, close to the Imperial Kiosk of Yildiz, where he lived. Opposite to it is a kind of guard-room, on the steps of which strangers are put to look upon the *cortège*. We were told to arrive early, but though it was barely ten o'clock when we reached the place, escorted by a kavass of the Embassy, and though the ceremony was fixed for eleven, we found the whole square in front of the mosque already occupied by troops. It was a most curious spectacle—such a wealth of colours, such a variety of uniforms, and such different types of people. After a long wait, shouts proclaimed the arrival of the Sultan. He appeared, mounted on a white horse, a dark, solemn figure, impassible under his red fez, with its diamond aigrette. Not a muscle of his face moved whilst he dismounted, and was greeted by the cheers of his troops. His face, though fine, struck one by its weak chin and sad expression. When he had disappeared within the mosque, the officers and high officials who had accompanied or escorted him dispersed on the square, and some of them came into the guardroom where we were; among them Moukhtar Pacha and the famous Osman, the hero of Plevna. He was still lame from the wound received during the last days of the siege, but the face had lost the hunted look which was so painful to look upon in those dark days. We started talking of that memorable

time, and I told him how very much the Russian troops had admired him, and how sorry we all were for him. He seemed pleased to find his defence had been appreciated, and then we spoke of Skobeleff. 'Ah! he is a brave man,' exclaimed Osman; 'he is a hero,' and learning I was a cousin of the Russian General he called to Moukhtar Pacha and told him so, after which the conversation became general between us three. Moukhtar Pacha, whom I was to meet a few years later at Cairo, was very different from his rival, Osman. He was tall, thin, with a serious countenance, and manners which were a great deal more polished and refined, also with a good knowledge of French, which was not the case with the hero of Plevna. But Osman's face was the more energetic, and the more sympathetic of the two. He looked what he was—a man who would say very little, but do a great deal—who, whatever difficulties he might encounter, would always perform his duty.

The Sultan remained over an hour in the mosque. When he came out at last all the Pachas and officers gathered round him, and, standing on the steps, he reviewed the troops. They were remarkable battalions that passed before him, stalwart, strong men, whose presence made one understand the resistance Russia had found. The black regiments were magnificent—they all appeared real soldiers, with all the go and courage which distinguishes them when they are, so to say, born to the trade.

The review was over in about half an hour, after which a sort of open phaeton, harnessed with a pair of splendid brown horses, was brought round. The Sultan placed himself in it, and after having called Osman Pacha, and made him sit by his side, took the reins himself and drove slowly away, amidst the shouts and cheers of the troops and crowd. His appearance left one with the impression of something unfinished, of the flitting shadow, either of a past fast dying away, or of a future not yet conquered or even grasped. It was all like a dream taken out of the Arabian Nights. As a dream it passed, and as a dream it has remained among the reminiscences of the men and places I have seen.

Our stay in Constantinople lasted three weeks, as I think I have said already. During that time we saw a great deal of the Dufferins. Lord Dufferin was, what he always remained to the very end of his life, one of the most charming of men—full of wit, humour, spirit, of an unfailing tact, and a courtesy which was unrivalled. He was popular everywhere, and with everybody; his colleagues appreciated the loyal way in which he collaborated with them and helped them in the innumerable difficulties which make of Constantinople such a difficult post. In society he was worshipped by women and liked by men, and he could be described as one of the cleverest and most remarkable diplomats of whom England can boast.

Lady Dufferin was one of the loveliest women

of her generation, and kept her good looks for a longer time than her sex generally does. She was a worthy helpmate of her illustrious husband: not so brilliantly clever, perhaps, but invariably well bred, courteous, amiable; gifted, too, with unusual tact. Their house was the one at which most entertainments were given. It constituted an unique centre of society, and the warm welcome extended by the host and hostess has, I am sure, never been forgotten by those who have had the privilege of enjoying it.

Among the interesting people who were at Constantinope at that time was Julian Klaczko, the author, who had just then left the Austrian diplomatic service, and who dined one night at Count Corti's. He was a pleasant, intelligent man, too much imbued with Polish ideas for me to sympathise with him thoroughly, but interesting in his conversation. Another person was the correspondent of the *Times* newspaper, Mr. (at present Sir) Donald Mackenzie Wallace, who is so well known in London society, and whom his book upon Russia had already made famous at the time I am writing of. He and I struck up a friendship which lasted for twenty years, and I certainly never imagined that anything could break it. At the present moment I do not know whether it still exists or not.

It was with a deep feeling of grief that I took leave of Count Corti. No host could have been kinder, more anxious for his guests' comforts than

he showed himself to be, and his wit and cleverness made a sojourn under his roof a delightful thing. I never met him again; he died shortly afterwards, after having been transferred as Ambassador to London, which had been the object of his ambition for years, but in which he was disappointed. 'London is no more what it was in my young days,' he wrote to me, a few weeks after having arrived there; 'society has changed, manners also; one sees quantity of new faces whom one feels have got no right to be there, and at the risk of being called old-fashioned, I must own I liked better to go to the receptions of Lady Palmerston or Lady Jersey than to those of Lady Rothschild or Mrs. Bischoffsheim.' He did not stay in London long. Whether it was disappointment or the climate, certain it was that he died a very short time after his return to the banks of the Thames, sincerely mourned by all those who knew him.

It was with a heavy heart I embarked one fine September morning, on a French Messageries Maritimes steamer for Odessa. I was going to my father's, but in spite of the joy of this reunion with him, it was quite a wrench to tear myself away from all the associations of these three weeks. Though I have twice since that memorable summer returned to Constantinople, I never found in it the pleasure I had enjoyed during my first visit there. The Bosphorus remained the same, the beauties of Stamboul were unchanged, but all the people with whom I had

been happy were either dead or gone, and my youth was also gone, with its power of enjoyment and that marvellous exuberance which makes it such a wonderful, beautiful thing. Eyes of twenty look at life, men, and things with rose spectacles, which unfortunately are but too soon discarded.

CHAPTER XII.

My First Winter at St. Petersburg — The Emperor Alexander III. and the Empress — Russian Society at the Beginning of their Reign — General Ignatiev and his struggle with General Tcherewine — The Zemski Sobor — Fall of Ignatiev — General Skobeleff and his Speeches — His Death in Moscow.

When we left Constantinople we went straight to St. Petersburg, where my father and my grandmother, with whom my children had been staying whilst we were travelling, were settled. We found the town almost empty as regards the gay part of it—it was October, the dull season of the year—but full to overflowing with the delegates to the various commissions Count Ignatiev had called together upon taking the direction of affairs. Things were still very unsettled, and people cowed by the atrocious crime of the 13th of March.

Yet, though sympathy was expressed with the murdered Emperor, it was remarkable how little regret was felt for him. Even among Court circles relief was, if not openly expressed, at least hinted at. The Princess Youriewski, between whom and the Imperial family painful scenes had taken place, was living in a palace that had been bought for her by the new sovereign, and making herself as important as she could. The young Court had almost immediately after the murder of Alexander II.

retired to the castle of Gatschina, an Imperial residence which had not been used since the time of Paul I., and there they lived in absolute seclusion, surrounded by a very small circle of friends, and almost completely cut off from the outer world. This did not please the public, though no one in Russia seriously entertained the idea, so general abroad, that this avoidance of the world was due to fear.

Alexander III. was not a coward, but he did not care for society, and even when quite a young man had preferred his fireside to the general amusements in which young men generally indulge. He hated everything like pomp and show, and really cared only for his wife and children. He also felt in a certain sense his utter insufficiency to meet the great problems and questions he was suddenly called upon to face. As heir to the throne, he had seen a great deal of the intrigues which during the reign of his father made the Russian Court such a centre of corruption. He had looked with loathing upon different men and women who occupied great positions, not through their talents, but on account of certain private influences. The Emperor came upon the throne with one idea only, that of surrounding himself with entirely honest men. He realised that wish, but, as everything else in this world, it turned out to have two sides, and though no accusation of dishonesty, or even of indelicacy, could be brought forward against those whom he honoured with his con-

fidence, yet they often did him incalculable harm with the narrow-mindedness of their ideas and opinions.

I have said already that the general public did not look with favourable eyes on the seclusion in which the sovereign lived at Gatschina. If the truth must be told, it was not a happy idea that led to the choice of this residence.

Gatschina, as the private country seat of a nobleman, would be an ideal place. The palace is large, and if not quite so comfortable as it might be in its interior arrangements, yet could be easily altered in that respect. The park is immense, more like a forest than anything else, and affording splendid shooting. Alexander III., always fond of fresh air and exercise, could indulge there in his favourite pastimes without fear of being disturbed or intruded upon. I have been told by persons who knew him well that it was these considerations which made him fix upon Gatschina as a residence, and I am fully persuaded this is the truth, but unfortunately as time went on, and he spent the greater part of the year shut away from his subjects, a certain legend began to form itself about it. Russia had not been used to see its sovereigns seclude themselves from their subjects. The Emperor Nicholas I. had gone about like a private gentleman, admitting not only those who were living in the upper circles of society, but also the middle classes, to the privilege of approaching him. He was devoted to masked balls, which he used to attend alone, very angry if any

one ventured to recognise him, and listening to all he could hear. Alexander II., though not quite so fond of making himself personally popular, still had never secluded himself from the world, which, on the contrary, he had passionately loved. He also entertained on a great scale. But Alexander III. resolutely shut his doors against all strangers, and only a select circle of about ten or twelve people had direct intercourse with him. His ministers even were kept at a distance, and were not always asked to stay for lunch when they came to Gatschina with their reports. The Empress, who was devoted to society, and loved dancing almost passionately, used to indulge in her favourite pastime during the short and always remarkably brilliant weeks of the St. Petersburg season, but the Imperial couple never entertained any one outside the small group of friends I have already mentioned. This made them enemies.

Alexander III. was, unlike his father, who posed for the man imbued with Occidental opinions, a typical Russian. He disliked speaking any foreign language, and it was mainly through his influence that Russian began once more to be talked in society, which, up to his accession had exclusively conversed in French or German. He was fervently Orthodox, and his one aim remained, all through the thirteen years he occupied the throne, to make Russia a strong nation, respected throughout the length and breadth of Europe. It is said he disliked Germans. It is

possible this was the case, but he never would have launched into an anti-German agitation. He took up the French alliance, not because of his personal sympathies, but because he firmly believed it to be necessary towards maintaining the European equilibrium, damaged by the Triple Alliance. He detested the policy of Prince Bismarck more than he disliked the man himself; for whom indeed he had a great respect. His amiabilities towards France did not proceed from his heart, but from his reason. The man was not brilliant, and could hardly even be called clever, but he had an extraordinary amount of common sense, and this common sense invariably inspired him to act in the best interests of his country. He found Russia in a chaos, and when he died he left the country in a far more prosperous condition than it had been for a long time, and with Nihilism almost extinct. He made himself popular, in his own strange way, among all classes of society; and when he died little children and women wept in the streets, so convinced was the whole nation that he had loved it, worked for it, and spared neither his time nor his strength, in order to make it great and prosperous.

The Empress contributed to his popularity; it would be difficult to imagine anything more attractive than she was, or is to the present day. Marie Feodorowna does not say much, but every word she utters is full of that genuine sympathy which goes so far to make those who possess

it popular and beloved. It was enough to see her enter a room to love her; it was impossible to resist the spell of those dark, beautiful eyes, so soft and kind. She was the guardian angel of the throne, which she occupied with such dignity.

But to come back to that eventful year, 1881.

As soon as Count Ignatiev took in hand the direction of home affairs he called together various commissions, to consider education and schools, the regulation of the liquor traffic, and sundry other questions, the discussion of which would, he hoped, bring about in time some change in the inner workings of the administration. In a certain sense the attempt was successful; but, later on, when Count Ignatiev tried to call together a kind of Parliament, he found himself confronted with the personal disgust and repugnance of Alexander III. towards that type of assembly, and he fell into a disgrace he has never got over.

But in November, 1881, the Count was all-powerful. He knew how to make the most of his position and advantages. He flattered the intelligent classes of society with the promise of things of which, perhaps, he did not quite realise himself the impossibility, and he appealed to the sovereign's patriotism, to help him in the difficult task of crushing Nihilism, and restoring to the country the equanimity which had been so rudely shaken by the catastrophe of March 13th.

We had intended, at first, to make but a short stay in St. Petersburg, but one of our children

sickened with typhoid fever, and this obliged us to remain for such a long time in the Russian capital that, at last, we made up our minds to take a house, and remain there for the whole winter. I was glad of this opportunity of staying among my own people, and so Christmas Day found us settled in a furnished and most uncomfortable house, about three doors from the one in which my grandmother lived.

Of course we asked to be presented to the new sovereigns, and it may be interesting to relate here how this presentation took place, especially as I believe that the ceremonial observed on such occasions has considerably changed since that time.

We received one morning notice that the Emperor would receive my husband at eleven o'clock on such-and-such a day, at the palace of Gatschina, and that the Empress would see me at the same time. We started by an unearthly early train, something like half-past eight, which necessitated getting up by candle-light. When we reached the Warsaw railway-station we found several diplomats, among them the Roumanian Minister, M. Kretzulesco, and his wife; and the Bavarian Minister, Baron Rudhardt, also with his wife. A chamberlain in uniform received us, and conducted us to a specially reserved railway carriage, and at about ten o'clock we reached Gatschina. There carriages awaited us, and we were driven to the palace, where lackeys in livery came to meet us, and showed us to a separate suite of rooms,

where we were offered coffee and tea. After a rather dreary waiting a servant appeared, and told my husband the Emperor was waiting for him. He left me, and I was taken, in my turn, to a drawing-room, together with two other ladies, and another waiting followed; then the wives of the two ministers were introduced, in turn, in the presence of the sovereign. Their audience lasted what to me appeared a long time, and at last I was called in.

I found the Empress standing in the middle of a large room, furnished with yellow damask, and having as only ornament a life-size portrait of the Empress Alexandra Feodorowna, *née* Princess Charlotte of Prussia, the wife of Nicholas I. A large sofa was placed almost under the picture, and it was on this sofa the Empress made me sit down beside her. It was the first time I had ever spoken with her, and I was agreeably surprised by her unaffected manner and the kindness of her attitude. It was then she related to me the details about the 13th of March, which I have mentioned in another chapter. She spoke of her children, some books she had read, among others Taine's *Ancien Régime*, and altogether chatted for about twenty minutes or so. When she dismissed me I spoke of my hope of being in Russia, and in Moscow during the coronation, but a sort of shadow seemed to pass over her countenance, and she answered, as if the subject was a painful one, 'Ah, nous sommes encore loin de cela.' When I came out I was asked, of course, how I had

found the young sovereign, and I could only express my deep admiration for her. But, indeed, who has ever seen Marie Feodorowna without becoming at once and for ever her most devoted slave?

Of course during that winter there was no kind of gaiety going on in St. Petersburg. The whole nation was in mourning; but the absence of any official entertainments did not prevent people from meeting almost daily in one place or another, and the deliberations of the commissions I have already mentioned were watched with almost painful interest. The salon of Countess Ignatiev was open every evening, and one was sure to meet there every person of importance in the Russian capital, as well as all foreigners, and the numerous people whom one reason or another had brought to town from the provinces. These evenings were most interesting, and I do not think there have ever been any like them since in St. Petersburg. Countess Ignatiev, a charming, clever, and at that time, still a most beautiful woman, possessed the art of entertaining, and the great interest which attached to every word of her illustrious husband gave an additional reason for being eager to go to their house. Count Ignatiev was still the idol of the Panslavists, the man who had been able to checkmate Turkey, and whose treaty of San Stefano, had it been ratified, would have answered to all the aspirations and hopes of the Russian people. In spite of the failure with which the policy of which he had been the representative

had met at Berlin, he had escaped the unpopularity which had dogged the steps of the members of the Government. The semi-disgrace in which he had fallen, after the Treaty of San Stefano had been signed by Turkey and rejected by the Powers, had only added to his prestige. He was credited with an intense patriotism, as well as with liberal tendencies. Personally I always had a great liking for Count Ignatiev. He was among my best friends, and, though I could not fail to recognise in him the failings which all those who like him must deplore, yet I do think that he has had more than any Russian statesman of modern times a clear conception of his country's needs and his country's strength. He always upheld its flag, and in that respect was a unique exception among our diplomats. He understood, what Englishmen have always understood, that whenever one of his countrymen was attacked it was Russia itself to whom the gauntlet was thrown down. In that respect he must be considered, as I have said already, an exception among those responsible for the government of his country.

About the end of November of that same year, St. Petersburg was startled by the news of the attempted assassination of General Tcherewine, at that time head of the secret department of police in the Home Ministry. We heard of it at dinner the same night, through my uncle, who was a member of one of Count Ignatiev's commissions, and who brought us the tale. My grandmother

was very much startled; she belonged to those who did not believe in Nihilist inactivity, and began prophesying that this new attempt was only the prelude to another series of the same crimes. Later on, when General Tcherewine became one of my best friends, he told me himself all the details of this ghastly adventure. The attempted murderer, a young Jew, came to the General with a letter; whilst the latter opened it, he noticed the young man putting his hand in his pocket, and heard the click of a revolver. Tcherewine was one of the coolest characters one could find. He merely turned towards his would-be assassin and said: 'Drop this nonsense, I know what you want to do; give me that revolver and I will let you go.' The young man's reply was to take out his pistol and to fire. The bullet went through the General's coat, flattening itself against a cigarette case he had in his pocket. Tcherewine threw himself upon his aggressor, and in the struggle which followed they both fell on the floor. Hearing the noise, one of the clerks at work in the next room opened the door, but, seeing the two men grasping with each other, began screaming at the top of his voice and ran away, without even attempting to come to the help of his chief. It was only after a few minutes that some police agents were got upon the scene and arrested the author of the murderous attempt. Tcherewine put on his uniform, and went at once to Gatschina to report the occurrence to the Emperor.

I have related in full this incident because it led

to great events. One was the disgrace of Count Ignatiev, the other the extreme favour in which General Tcherewine was taken by Alexander III., as well as his appointment to the head of the secret police of the whole Empire, which made him responsible for the personal safety of the sovereign, whom he never left afterwards. This position made of him the most powerful personage in Russia, and it is certain no one in that country has ever wielded more power than did the General for fourteen years: a power which resisted even a change of reign, and lasted until his own death. Count Ignatiev had never been on very good terms with General Tcherewine, the characters of the two men being absolutely different, and antipathetic to each other. One was above everything a diplomat; the other, on the contrary, a plain speaker who never lacked for words to express what he thought was the truth. He was bound to become the favourite of a sovereign like Alexander III., whose greatest quality was precisely the love of truth. The two men had been friends for a long time, and the Empress never forgot how the General had been ready to resign his position and career, because he had been the cause of an annoyance to her, as I have related in a preceding chapter. It was he who had accompanied the young Grand Duchess in that drive which had so irritated Alexander II. When she ascended the throne the new Empress made it her business to show her gratitude to the General, and undoubtedly it was to

her that he owed, in great part, the position he was to rise to.

The relations between the General and his immediate chief, Count Ignatiev, which at first were cool, not to say strained, became positively hostile, after the pistol-shot that had so nearly killed Tcherewine. He was the first to perceive that his continuance in the post he occupied was quite impossible, and he resigned without giving notice to his chief, but by simply informing the Emperor that he could not continue in office. Alexander III.'s reply to this was to appoint his favourite to the post of head of his immediate bodyguard. This led to new friction with Ignatiev, and from that moment war was declared between the two men; a war which lasted until Tcherewine overthrew his rival in May of the following year.

It happened in this way. Ignatiev had submitted to the Emperor a plan for calling together in St. Petersburg representatives of all classes of society in order to discuss the reforms which all felt were necessary in the government of the country. This meeting was to be held in imitation of those old ones which, in the bygone times of Russian history, were held among the Boyars assembled in consultation together with the Czar. It was to be called by the ancient name of Zemski Sobor, sacred to the readers of history, as well as to the lovers of ancient Russian traditions. At first the plan had been accepted by the Emperor, but soon (and here it was that

Tcherewine's influence began to be felt) he refused his consent to it under the pretext that people would see in this calling together of a council to discuss the needs of the nation, a step towards the granting of those Constitutional liberties which he had made up his mind never to accord. Frictions ensued, and at last Count Ignatiev, who had—a circumstance most extraordinary in a man of his intelligence—never realised that his position was shaken, offered to resign. The Emperor said nothing, but the very next day the news that Count Tolstoi had been appointed Minister surprised the whole of Russia, and no one more so than the man to whose place he was succeeding.

Count Tolstoi—the statesman, not the novelist—was, without exception, the most unpopular man in Russia. He had been for a long time Minister for Public Education, and had distinguished himself by what people said were the most intolerant measures of repression of every liberal spirit in the conduct of schools and Universities. Alexander II. had been obliged to yield to public opinion which clamoured for his dismissal, and after having held for some time the post of Procurator of the Holy Synod, he had at last been compelled to retire into private life. It was to this man, hated, anathematised by almost every class of society, that Alexander III. confided the destinies of his Empire, at a time when it seemed that that Empire was crumbling away.

And the choice turned out to have been a wise

one. Count Tolstoi showed himself a man who understood the needs of his country, and, given a free hand, exhibited none of that despotic spirit which had made him so universally disliked before. His administration was a good one, and, until he died, Russia enjoyed a period of prosperity such as she had not known for a long time.

Count Tolstoi was distantly related to my mother. He was at daggers drawn with my two uncles, and in consequence of it my grandmother's relations with him were strained. But this did not interfere with mine with his wife and daughter, who were among my best friends in St. Petersburg. The Countess Tolstoi always showed me invariable kindness, and the Count himself also was amiable, and often helped me by his advice.

When the Emperor called him back to power, Count Tolstoi, who had never imagined he could again play a part in the public life of his country, hesitated for some time before accepting. It was then, I think, that General Tcherewine interfered, and explained to him what was required from his patriotism by Alexander III. As soon as he realised how matters stood, Count Tolstoi's resolution was taken, and he put his services at the disposal of his sovereign.

Whilst these negotiations were going on, and whilst town was ringing with the news that a few short days would see the end of Count Ignatiev's administration, he seemed to be the only person not aware of the change which was going to take place in his destinies, as well as in those of his

country. The Countess went on with her evening receptions, no longer held in town, but at a villa in one of the islands which surround St. Petersburg. It was the end of May, or beginning of June ; town was emptying itself, and we were also on the point of leaving it. The rumours of the impending change were, however, so persistent that I thought I would drive one evening to the islands, and see for myself how things were going on.

My curiosity was not gratified—things were just as usual. The Countess Ignatiev was seated at her tea-table, surrounded by a few friends—fewer, perhaps, than before—but she seemed to be in high spirits, lamenting, at the same time, that her husband's duties would keep him in town the whole of the summer. He, in his turn, spoke about different things which were going to be done, and the couple behaved in such a way that driving back home I told my husband I really could not believe in the gossip that was going on, and that it seemed to me that people who were going to be turned out could not appear so calm and so secure of their position.

And yet this same evening was the last of Count Ignatiev's administration. At the very moment we were drinking tea with him and his wife, printers were busy putting into type the news of his disgrace. It was the next morning that the appointment of Count Tolstoi was gazetted, and General Tcherewine had a lovely anecdote on this subject, the authenticity of which, however, I would not care to guarantee.

Ministers, when they went to Gatschina with their reports, generally telegraphed to the station-master there, to reserve for them a saloon carriage in the fast train passing through that station on its way to St. Petersburg. On the morning of that eventful June day General Tcherewine was told that the station-master insisted upon seeing him. When introduced, the puzzled official showed to the General two telegrams, one asking him to reserve a saloon carriage for Count Ignatiev, Minister of the Interior, the second one making the same request on the part of Count Tolstoi, also Minister of the Interior. 'What am I to do?' exclaimed the unfortunate station-master, 'and who is the Minister of the Interior?'

Tcherewine was, as usual, equal to the occasion. 'Never mind who is the Minister of the Interior,' he replied; 'satisfy both these gentlemen, and let them each have a saloon carriage.'

After that day cordial relations were never re-established between Ignatiev and the author of his fall. Animosity, bitter and enduring, divided the two men until death carried one of them away. I believe I was the only person at whose house they met, and then it was always accidentally. When such meetings occurred, which I always tried to avoid if possible, it was Ignatiev who generally went away, reproaching me gently afterwards for the 'new friendships,' as he used to call them, which made my house unpleasant for those who had frequented it for many years. I used to laugh, and tell him nothing would change me

towards my old friends, but that I would not give up the new ones either. I think that at heart Ignatiev never quite forgave me for this intrusion of his enemy into my home life, and in latter years I certainly did not see so much of him as I had done formerly, but we continued great friends, and I hope if ever he reads this book he will find in it the expression of the great regard I have for him.

During that same winter St. Petersburg was startled by what was called the Skobeleff incident. General Skobeleff was certainly at that time the most popular personage in the Empire. His name had become, since the Turkish War, the personification of everything that was heroic, and his brilliant conduct of the campaign in Central Asia, crowned with the storming of Geok Tepe, had made him the idol of the nation, as he had been for years the idol of the army. His influence was immense, not only among soldiers, who worshipped him, but among the different classes of society. In him the hopes of the Russian people reposed; his was supposed to be the sword which was destined to lead them to victory, and to add to the conquests of Peter the Great and Catherine II. Skobeleff was all-powerful by the hold he had taken upon the imagination of the masses, and certain it is that had he wished to throw the weight of his immense popularity, and remarkable personality, in favour of any political party, that party would have acquired an importance which might well have inspired the sovereign with fears for the security of his throne.

I wish I could describe Skobeleff to my readers as he appeared to my young imagination; but how can I find words eloquent enough to depict that heroic figure, so utterly unlike anything seen before or after him? In spite of all his faults, and he had many, he will remain the one legendary personage of modern Russian history. None before, and no one after him, has so completely identified himself with the aspirations, hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows of the Russian people. He had all the virtues, as well as all the vices, of the race to which he belonged. In him it was Russia itself that had been incarnated. His mind was a reflection of the mind of his countrymen; he had their enthusiasm and he possessed their faith—that strong, earnest faith which has enabled Russia to withstand so many trials, to overcome such numerous difficulties. Skobeleff was undaunted as Russians only can be undaunted; he had many of the savage traits of character which are so prominent in all Russians, even those belonging to the upper classes, and which enable them to withstand so much, under which more civilised people would break down and succumb. His energetic soul was one that would not admit defeat. He was the Bayard of a race which had not yet been spoiled by the false civilisation which has destroyed so much that is brave, so much that is good, among the nations it has laid hold of.

Archibald Forbes is the man that has given the best description of General Skobeleff; the shrewd Scotsman grasped in what was really a marvellous

way the different sides of this complex nature, which had in it such a curious blending of tenderness and ferocity, of the noblest qualities, as well as of the most violent, unhealthy passions. He read with surprising ability the intricacies of a mind born great, and rendered greater still by circumstances. His book is the noblest memorial that has been raised to the memory of the Russian hero, whose name has remained so dear to the hearts of all who knew him.

How dear it was, what a lasting hold it had taken on the minds and imagination of the Russian nation, is best illustrated by the following anecdote which was related to me years after Skobeleff's death. One day a friend of mine was riding through a village in Southern Russia, a strange dog had strayed into it, and was received with violent enmity by those of the place. The mongrel, for it was nothing else, put up his teeth, and fought a battle in which his assailants were decidedly worsted. Seeing this, a peasant, whom by his demeanour one easily recognised for a former soldier, turned to my friend, and pointing to the panting animal, 'Look at that dog, Barine,' he said, 'isn't it a true Skobeleff?'

After the war of 1877, the White General, as he was called, had always manifested a great interest in politics, once or twice his attitude in regard to the Bulgarian question (there was at one time a question of electing him to the government of that Principality) had irritated the Government. When he was sent to Central Asia

people hoped he would forget all thoughts of playing a political *rôle*. He was given on his return, much to his disgust, for he did not think the appointment worthy of him, the command of an Army Corps at Minsk, and it was whilst on a short leave in St. Petersburg that he made the first of the famous speeches which were to have such a wide circulation throughout Europe. It was on the occasion of the banquet given in commemoration of the storming of Geok Tepe, that he gave way to his feelings, and allowed himself to express his distrust of German friendship and German policy. Newspapers being censored in Russia, his exuberant language was not reproduced with exactitude, but what came to the knowledge of the public was sufficient to add to the popularity of the hero who had given way to it.

The Government, however, did not see it in the same light, and consequent on representations made by the German Ambassador, Skobeleff was given to understand that such expressions of private opinions would not be tolerated for the future. Of course he was profoundly irritated by these hints. He had always thought himself ill-used since some plans of his for reforms in the army had been rejected, and he had at heart the idea that the Emperor was secretly jealous of his popularity.

His was a nature created for struggle, and every-day existence was bound to weigh upon him and possibly drive him into discontent. He could not be happy in the humdrum of garrison life. He

wanted something to think of, as well as something to do, and besides he was profoundly disgusted at the turn things had taken at the Congress of Berlin. Strange to say, this man whom the war had made great, had nevertheless a horror of it in spite of its fascination and the scope it gave him for employing his rare talents. He was at heart a kind man, and the sight of human suffering and human woes, had the power to move him strangely. He could not forgive those who had held in their hands the destinies of Russia at Berlin, for not having insisted on a proper reward for the heroism of the army, and the spirit of self-sacrifice displayed by the whole nation. In his opinion, the peace that had been concluded was bound to be broken. At some manœuvres he had attended in Berlin, he had allowed something of this to escape him, as well as his conviction that the German army was not so invulnerable as some people imagined. I don't know whether it was this circumstance, or the fact of his speeches, which had made Count Moltke so bitter against him, but years after Skobeleff's death, in fact a few days after the death of Gambetta, I happened to be sitting next to Count Moltke at a dinner in Berlin, and asking him his opinion about the disappearance from the political stage of the French statesman, got from him this reply, 'I was very glad to hear he was dead, just as glad as I was when they told me Skobeleff was no more!' I shall never forget the poor Field Marshal's confusion when I told

him that the White General had been my cousin.

Skobeleff's St Petersburg speech had already been sufficiently sensational; one can imagine therefore the stupefaction of the public when it heard that it had been followed by a far more violent one, in response to the greetings of a Servian deputation in Paris, whither the General had gone in order to cool his bad temper. The Emperor was furious, and immediately recalled him to St. Petersburg. I shall never forget the excitement into which society was thrown, nor the different speculations of the public as to the fate he would meet on his return. His whole family welcomed him at the railway station, and I remember his aunt, who was also mine, old Countess Adlerberg, taking a bouquet with her to offer to the returning hero, at which everybody laughed. But this demonstration had its good side, for it gave to the public the idea that, for once, friends had not proved false, as is so often the case at a Court. The day after his return from Paris, Skobeleff was summoned to Gatschina. No one knows what took place during this interview between Alexander III. and the White General. Skobeleff never spoke about it. but it was noticed that he became more morose than he had ever been before, and that the melancholy, to which he had more than once given way since his mother's tragic death (she was assassinated in Bulgaria by a young man whom she had brought up, and rescued from misery and starvation), increased to an alarming degree. He

made but a short stay in the capital, and returned to Minsk, a saddened, disappointed man, with the shadow of a great sorrow hanging over his head, and the feeling that his life was being wasted.

Three or four months passed. It was the end of June; we had left St. Petersburg, and were settled for the summer in the country. At that time, we used to get only two mails a week, and the arrival of the postman was always more or less of an event. I was standing on the verandah, when the bag was brought to me, and as I opened the paper the first lines that fell under my eyes contained the announcement of the sudden death in Moscow of Michael Skobeleff.

He had been cut off in the splendour of his manhood, at a moment's notice, by an implacable disease, which strikes its victims with a swift and cruel mercilessness. Without preparation, without warning, the idol of a whole nation had been carried away, among the wailings and passionate regrets of the people to whose minds he had represented an ideal. Mourned by friends, as well as regretted by foes, his death was deplored by all alike as a national calamity. The whole of Russia was shaken by the news that its popular hero was no more. In Moscow the expressions of regret, one may almost say of despair, surpassed everything that had been seen before. People met in silent consternation in the streets, shops were closed, business suspended, the whole life of the town seemed to have died with him. In the hotel,

to which his body had been brought back, crowds clustered together, standing for hours outside the door, in expectation of the moment when they would be admitted to the prayers which, according to Russian custom, are celebrated twice a day beside a dead person, previous to the funeral. During these prayers the sobs of the assistants almost drowned the voices of the priests. The whole of Russia mourned at Skobeleff's bier.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Death of Madame de Balzac—Return to Berlin—Silver Wedding of the Crown Prince and Princess—Prince William of Prussia—The Coronation of the Emperor Alexander III.

It was during the spring of that same year, 1882, on Easter Day, that my aunt, Madame de Balzac, died. She was already far advanced in the eighties, and for years had been a great invalid. Sad circumstances accompanied her demise, money losses and the phantom of angry creditors crowding around her death-bed. Her daughter completely lost her head, and left the house immediately after her mother's funeral. All my aunt's papers were thrown away by unscrupulous or careless servants, and found their way into a fruiterer's shop, where the Vicomte Spoelberch de Lowenjoul bought them, editing from their contents the wonderful correspondence which has since been given to the world. It is an everlasting source of regret to me that I was not able to be in Paris at that time. I might, perhaps, have been able to save some of these family relics, and I would, at least, have had the comfort of being with my aunt during these last sad days. Her disappearance put an end to a chapter in my life of which I have only good and noble remembrances. With her died one of those rare beings who occasionally

appear in the world to teach it how to get better. With her passed away ideas and opinions which are no longer heard, and with her death a great light went out.

We spent the summer which followed in Russia at my own country place, and late in autumn we returned to Berlin. We found it had considerably changed during the two years we had been away. Prince William of Prussia had married, and his personality was beginning to make its weight felt in Court circles, and even outside them. The hostility which later on was going to become so acute between him and his father, was already beginning to be noticed by the public, and rumours of a disagreement, in which the Emperor had almost, if not quite, taken the side of his grandson against the latter's father, were circulated freely.

I found the Crown Princess on my return struggling against a sense of irritation she did not care to own to, but which was visibly worrying her. The Prince viewed the situation in a calmer mood. His mind was too essentially practical to allow himself to fret over a state of things for which his own career as heir to a throne must have, in a certain measure, prepared him. He had more indulgence in his character than the Princess, and, perhaps, less ambition. And, then, he did not look seriously upon the vagaries of his eldest son, and was so confident about his own future that he did not care to trouble himself too much about what he

considered to be the natural exuberance of a youthful mind. In Court circles, however, the attitude of Prince William was looked upon as threatening to become an important factor in politics. There was a tendency to consider him cleverer than the Crown Prince, and more German in his opinions. Prince Bismarck, with whom he was a great favourite, made it a point to repeat that the young man, at present debarred of the means of acting independently, had in him every quality necessary to the making of a great sovereign; The Chancellor never lost an opportunity of praising to William I. the young man, whom he considered as his pupil, and the aged monarch was beginning to think that in his grandson, and only in him, would he find a worthy successor.

All these secret rivalries were naturally the cause of continual frictions, and so upon my return to Berlin I found the situation of the royal family very different from what it had been two years before.

It was during that winter, which, by reason of the celebration of the silver wedding of the Crown Prince and Princess, was unusually gay, that I became better acquainted with the present ruler of Germany. Like all those who approached him, I was impressed by his remarkable personality, the originality of his mind, and the powerfulness of his intelligence. Apart from these qualities, Prince William was a most attractive, fascinating man. He possessed the gift of personal magnetism, and, being a most brilliant talker, he contrived, even in

those days, to convert people to a good many of his opinions by the persuasive way in which he expressed them. With all his seriousness, there was in his nature a boyishness and vitality which one could scarcely resist. With all the impetuosity of youth, he had in his judgments a maturity which was wonderful. He had few illusions, and yet there was no cynicism in his appreciations of others, whatever there may have been in the plans he was even then making for the future. We soon became great friends, if the expression can be applied to the necessarily formal relations which could only exist between us; but whenever we met, and it was often enough during that winter, and later on oftener still, we liked to talk together. He was at that time very fond of society and entertainments, fondness which it was rumoured he sometimes carried too far; but whatever truth there was in all this gossip, it is certain that his manner towards his wife was always irreproachable, and the young couple lived, outwardly at least, and I believe also in reality, a most happy life.

The Princess, the kindest woman in the world, laboured during these early years under the disadvantage of being almost continually in a delicate state of health, which compelled her to live retired from society, and it was but natural under the circumstances that every friendship her husband had with another lady, whoever she might be, should be misconstrued by the public. The Princess, however, secure in her husband's love, had the good sense to shut her ears to gossip.

THE CROWN PRINCE AND PRINCESS

Before even Christmas had made its usual appearance, society was busy with the preparations which were begun to give special *éclat* to the silver wedding of the Crown Prince and Princess. A great fancy ball was organized, under the patronage of the Empress, and the whole world, at least that portion of the world called Court society, became absorbed with the repetitions of the various quadrilles and the historical procession which were to be a special feature in these festivities. Almost every evening rehearsals took place, sometimes in one house, sometimes in another, and the amount of rivalries, spite, and envy which these rehearsals revealed was something quite amazing. It spite of it, however, as we were all young, we contrived to get a good deal of amusement out of all these opportunities of meeting each other, and friendships were formed which have survived to the present day.

The Crown Princess herself took a great interest in these different preparations, and discussed them eagerly. A few days before the actual anniversary I dined at the palace of the Crown Prince, and she was full of happy anticipations of the brilliancy of the forthcoming pageant. It was a small dinner, only my mother-in-law, my husband and myself were invited to it, with Prince William and, of course, the young Princesses. I sat next to the present Emperor of Germany, and this dinner has left an impression on my mind by a remark he made to me during the course of it. We were talking of friends and friendships when Prince

William suddenly said to me, 'When one occupies certain positions in the world, one ought to try to make more dupes than friends.' I remember exclaiming against this enunciation of what I thought was an execrable principle, when he interrupted me, and added this time quite seriously, 'You will see later on what I mean.' The Crown Princess was looking on, so I thought it better not to pursue the subject, but I have often thought since of this remark, which appeared so strange at the time it was made, and on the strength of which, I must confess, I made a bet with a Russian friend of mine, at the time of William II.'s accession, that he would very soon get rid of his Chancellor, notwithstanding the immense affection which he was just then professing for him.

The wedding-day of the heir to the throne was January 25th. About the 20th the different guests invited for the occasion began to assemble, and, so far as I can remember, a State ball was going to take place on January 21st, when we were startled on the morning of that day by the news that old Prince Charles of Prussia, the Emperor's brother, had been taken suddenly ill, and had died in the course of a few hours.

He had lived such a retired life since the death of his wife, which had occurred some five or six years before, that he was almost forgotten, and the first feeling which was occasioned by his unexpected demise was anger just as much as consternation. The Crown Princess in her disappointment declared he had done it on purpose, in order to aggravate

her in death, as he had done in life (they had always been more or less at daggers drawn), and suggested keeping the event secret for a day or two; but, of course, this could not be thought of, and was said more in paradox than in earnest. But I am not quite sure that many a fair lady who had spent a large sum on a now useless dress, did not secretly formulate a wish that the untoward event might be kept from the general knowledge.

There was, however, nothing to do but for the different guests to disperse sadly. The Prince was buried at Potsdam, with as little ceremony as possible, and with a haste which had nothing edifying in it. No sooner were the sad ceremonies connected with his funeral at an end, than one began to make plans for the celebration of the festivities his death had interrupted.

These were finally fixed for February 25th, and on that day really took place one of the most splendid pageants I have ever attended. The Crown Prince and Princess, after having received the congratulations of their friends, took their seat on the throne between the Emperor and the Empress, and the different processions went past them, followed by a succession of quadrilles in which the most prominent members of society took part. The performance was meant to reproduce the Court of Queen Elizabeth, and the Queen herself, represented by the Countess Udo of Stolberg Wernigerode, whose features were supposed to recall those of the illustrious lady she personified, appeared in a most gorgeous

costume of red velvet covered with jewels, a vision of magnificence and beauty. She was followed by ladies and gentlemen of her Court, among whom figured Prince William who was leading Lady Ampthill, the wife of the British Ambassador. I was one of those who followed in their train, and my partner was the Bavarian Minister, Count Lerchenfeld, who with a costume of black velvet wore a magnificent Spanish sword which had been lent to him by the Regent of Bavaria. My own dress was white velvet and gold, and if I remember aright was very much admired. The procession, after having passed before the throne, took up its place opposite to it whilst the different quadrilles, three in number, were danced, after which appeared a sort of chariot from which Princess William, dressed as a fairy, emerged and addressed the Crown Prince and Princess in a few complimentary words which were the end of the ceremony. We were then allowed to circulate and mix among the other guests, and it was most interesting to examine the different dresses of which we had not had a glimpse before.

The Crown Princess was delighted, and if I remember right it was the last time I saw her really enjoy a Court festivity. I shall never forget her as she stood on that momentous evening by the side of her husband, nor the look of affection with which he responded to the fond glance she gave him. I wondered whether they were thinking of that bygone day when, in the chapel of St. James's Palace, they had taken each

other for better or worse. Certainly few people could, after twenty-five long years, look back on such complete happiness and perfect union, as these two had enjoyed for the quarter of a century they had lived together.

In May of that same year, the Coronation of the Emperor Alexander III. took place at Moscow, and I realised my wish to be present at the festivities which accompanied it. We started for Russia, my husband and I, on May 16th. In the same train we were travelling by, was the French special mission, and I was much amused the other day in reading Madame Waddington's letters, with her description of this journey and of the Coronation ceremonies. She seemed to have taken quite seriously the various rumours which were circulated abroad concerning a probable attempt on the part of the Nihilists to murder the Emperor. I don't think that in Russia any one stopped for a moment to think of the possibility of such a thing, and certainly there was none of the emotion displayed on the day of the sovereign's public entry into Moscow which she says she witnessed. I also viewed the procession from the house of the Governor-General, Prince Dolgorouki, and I did not see the congratulations nor the numerous signs of the Cross which seem to have impressed Madame Waddington so thouroughly as to make her write a whole page on the subject. Of course people were anxious, but Russians are not fond of wearing their hearts on their sleeves, and they would never make such an

exhibition of themselves as the one she so graphically described.

For the rest her letters are interesting and accurate reading: as accurate at least as could be expected from a foreigner not understanding the Russian language, and whose "leg had been pulled" more or less, to use a vulgar expression which I hope my readers will forgive me.

I shall never forget those weeks in Moscow. When fourteen years later I witnessed the Coronation of the present Emperor it appeared to me to be very insignificant in comparison with the splendours which had marked that of his father.

Perhaps the explanation of this may be found in part in the greater popularity enjoyed by Alexander III., and especially by the affection which his consort had inspired everywhere and in every one. Nobody who heard the vociferous shouts which greeted the Empress Marie Feodorowna, when she appeared on the day of her entry into Moscow, sitting in her big golden carriage drawn by eight white horses, with her little daughter by her side, will ever forget it. She was a perfect vision of loveliness, all in white, with a lace veil falling on her shoulders, and the Russian Kakoschnik in diamonds on her head. She bowed repeatedly to the crowd, and her large, lovely eyes wandered among the sea of faces which surrounded her. The Emperor was riding a good bit in front, and I must say he did not appear to advantage that day. He was mounted on a white horse far too small for him, and instead of riding in

front of his suite he kept among them, so that it was difficult to see him at a first glance. His eyes, in contrast to those of the Empress, had a sad, weary expression, whether from fatigue or from another feeling, it was of course impossible to tell.

The day following upon the entry we went round the different Grand Duchesses to write our names down, and ended by calling on the *Grande Maitresse de la Cour*, the Princess Hélène Kotschoubey, who was an aunt of mine.

It was a remarkable European figure that of the Princess Hélène. Few women had had such an adventurous past, and few had borne with greater dignity the burden of a great name, or fulfilled more brilliantly the duties inseparable from a great position. She was a *grande dame* to her finger-tips, had lived on intimate and familiar terms with all the crowned heads of Europe, had studied the etiquette of the various Courts she had frequented, and was a valued friend of Queen Louise of Denmark, to whose influence she owed her appointment as Mistress of the Robes. The young Empress had absolute confidence in her, and owed a good deal of her popularity to my aunt's advice and guidance at the beginning of her reign. The Princess Hélène, to give her the name by which she was familiarly called in St. Petersburg society, was born to the place she occupied. No one has filled it like she did, no one has ever performed its duties with such success and such zeal. When she died the whole tone of

the Court was changed, and it lost markedly in politeness as well as in dignity.

The Princess was always very kind to me, and during these Moscow days she contrived, in spite of her numerous occupations, to think about us and give us all the opportunities she could to see what was going on in the easiest way she only could devise.

The Coronation morning dawned, not fair and clear as had been hoped for, but rainy and dark. We had to get up at something like five o'clock, and by eight were in our places, not in the church itself, where only the ambassadors and *chefs de mission* were admitted, but in one of the tribunes outside. It was a most impressive sight. The whole of the vast square in front of the famous red staircase of the Kremlin was covered with red cloth, and on each step of the staircase itself stood alternately a *Chevalier Garde* in his white tunic, and gold cuirass, and a Cossack of the Escort in his scarlet uniform. The sun, shortly after we had settled ourselves in our places, came out, and its rays as they flashed on the bright uniforms added to their colour a soft tint, which made them appear even more beautiful than they were in reality. The whole square was black with people, drawn from all classes of society, peasants included. A common feeling of expectancy was running through the veins of all this crowd united by a kind of electric current, which made it think the same things, expect the same sensations. After a long wait, the clergy came out of the Cathedral

of the Assumption, and sprinkled with holy water the path which was going to be trodden by the sovereign. Then the doors of the palace were thrown open, and a long procession of chamberlains, in their gold-embroidered uniforms appeared, and came slowly down the steps of the red staircase, which is the only exit from the Kremlin into the square. They passed slowly, two and two, and entered into the church, soon followed by the different royal personages who were to witness the ceremony, headed by the Queen of Greece, and the heir to the Russian throne, now the Emperor Nicholas II. The expectation of the crowd became more and more intense, when at last the great bell of Iwan Weliki struck a peal, and on the top of the staircase appeared Alexander III. leading the Empress. He was in full General's uniform, and she was most simply dressed in cloth of silver, with nothing in her hair, looking so young that one could have taken her for a bride about to be led to the altar, rather than for an Empress on her way to be crowned. An immense shout greeted the sovereigns, a shout such as I fancy they had never heard before, so intensely loyal did it ring. The crowd was electrified, and as the Emperor and Empress stepped under the canopy, carried by twelve generals, which was awaiting them at the foot of the staircase, the enthusiasm of the mob verged very near on hysterics.

Our tribune was full of diplomats, and of course the long time we had to wait before the procession

emerged from the church was spent most pleasantly. The only dark feature was, that we could not get anything to eat, and, as we had been up since about five o'clock, we began to feel ravenous as midday drew near. An Austrian secretary, Baron Aerenthal, now Ambassador in St. Petersburg, offered me some chocolate he had in his pocket, and even now, after so many years, I feel grateful to him for that kindness.

Whilst we were struggling between hunger and amusement, the ceremony in the Cathedral was going on. It seems that when the Empress had been crowned, Alexander III., unable to restrain his emotion, took her in his arms, as he raised her from the cushion on which she knelt, and pressed her to his heart in a passionate embrace, at which Count Pahlen, principal Master of Ceremonies, was so horrified, that he rushed towards the Emperor, with an agonised cry, 'Sire, ce n'est pas dans le cérémonial!' I will not vouch for the truth of this anecdote, but it was repeated as a standing joke at the time.

It must have been close on two o'clock when a movement in the crowd outside the cathedral told us that the ceremony of the coronation was at an end. The doors of the old church were thrown open, and the Emperor and Empress appeared, arrayed in their crowns and robes of State. Alexander III. was walking alone, under the canopy of cloth of gold and ostrich feathers, the enormous crown of the Russian emperors on his head, the long mantle lined with ermine over his

shoulders, holding the sceptre in one hand, and the orb in the other. The sun which, save for one brief moment at the beginning of the day had been veiled by clouds, suddenly burst forth again, and its rays played among the diamonds of the crown, and lighted the face of the sovereign with a peculiar glow. He appeared positively magnificent as he towered over everybody, gigantic in his stature, and beautiful in the whole expression of his countenance, and the majesty of his demeanour. Behind him the Empress was walking, also with the crown upon her dark hair, but somehow she did not look as pretty as she had done in the earlier part of the day, when she emerged out of the Kremlin. The weight of her mantle was pulling her down, and it had not been nicely fastened on her shoulders, and gave her a choked appearance. Her cheeks, too, were crimson, and altogether she seemed quite insignificant beside her splendid husband. That day was the triumph of Alexander III. Never before, and never after, did he look as he appeared at that hour when he presented himself for the first time before his subjects, as their crowned lord and master.

Slowly the Emperor and Empress went round the four cathedrals of the Kremlin alone, and not followed, as Madame Waddington says, by the Imperial family, or members of the diplomatic body, and at last they once more reappeared on the square, and went up the steps of the red staircase. When they reached the top, they turned round and bowed to the crowd three times. It

was then that the enthusiasm reached its culminating point, and I do not think that any one who heard the shouts of that vast multitude could ever doubt the feeling of affection which existed among the Russian people for its Czar.

When the Imperial couple had retired there was a scramble as to who should first get into the palace, where we hoped to find some lunch. But, first of all, we had to witness the solemn meal of the Emperor, to the first part of which the Corps Diplomatique was admitted, retiring backwards when Alexander III. raised his glass. It was a pretty and quaint sight, that of the raised throne, and the Emperor and Empress, in their robes of State, sitting alone at a small table. Only I doubt whether we gave it the attention we should have done in different circumstances; we were too hungry to enjoy anything, and I remember feeling very glad to be seated between two members of the Chinese Embassy, whose ignorance of a European language relieved me from attempting a conversation, and allowed me to eat without being disturbed.

That same evening we went to view the illuminations, and magnificent they were; the crowd, though immense, was most orderly. The next day there was a ball at the old palace of the Kremlin, where we all appeared in Court trains, and here again Madame Waddington is inaccurate, for certainly no Russian ladies were arrayed in ball-gowns with the Russian kakoschnik. This head-dress is only worn with Court trains, which everybody had on.

It was on the occasion of this ball that for the first time the great tower of Iwan Weliki was illuminated with electricity, and nothing could have been more beautiful than the aspect of the ancient monument seen from the windows of the old Granowitaia Palata, as the room is called in which we assembled on that night. The ball did not last long, and the Empress looked lovely in a train of pink velvet embroidered in silver.

During the fortnight which followed the coronation, ball after ball and festivity after festivity succeeded each other; but I will not give a detailed account of all of them. One of the most remarkable was the ball given by the Governor-General of Moscow, which was so crowded, that at one moment we thought the Emperor and Empress would be unable to fight their way through the guests. I have never witnessed anything like it, and while we were being squashed I was amused by hearing one lady candidly confessing to another that she had not been invited at all, but had come all the same, as 'I knew I should never be found out,' she said, with an impudence which certainly deserved a better reward, than being crushed to the condition of a pancake, which was the fate which overtook all those who were present.

Another entertainment which I remember on account of its magnificence, was the ball in the Alexander Hall of the new palace of the Kremlin. It was the last one that was given, and it surpassed all the others. The sight of Moscow, as it appeared

illuminated from the balcony on which the ball-room opened, was in itself a spectacle never to be forgotten. The hundred towers and belfries of the old city impressed one so strangely, when, after having gazed upon them, one turned round and saw the brilliant crowd which filled the rooms and halls of the palace. It was a curious sight, a mixture of civilisation and barbarism which made one understand better than any words could have done that strange and terrible thing called Holy Russia.

It was during the popular feast, which is one of the features of the coronation of the Russian Emperors, that Alexander III. told the deputations of peasants, which, according to custom, he received on this occasion, that they must not give credence to the different rumours which at that time were spread concerning his supposed intention of taking away land from its owners in order to give it to them. The words, though brief, by solid common sense, did more then than anything else to put an end to a certain agitation which ever since the murder of Alexander II. had been going on among the rural classes of the population, much to its detriment. The Emperor's speech sobered them at once, and in consequence life in the country became much more tolerable than it had been for the last three or four years.

Among the amusing incidents of the coronation the following occurred. The occasion of the ceremony was taken advantage of to inaugurate the new Cathedral of the Saviour, which had just been com-

pleted and erected in memory of the defeat of the French troops under Napoleon in 1812. The Diplomatic Corps were invited, with the exception, of course, of the French Embassy. On the morning of the consecration one of the masters of ceremonies suddenly discovered in one of the galleries a lady in the deepest of mourning, covered from head to foot by a crêpe veil. Horrified at the sight, for black is strictly forbidden at Court, especially on any festive occasion, he rushed to the lady and asked her who she was, and how she came to appear in such extraordinary clothes on such a day. One may imagine his stupefaction when he found out that she was the wife of the French Consul, and had expressed her sorrow at the defeat of her compatriots in that singular way. It was with the greatest of trouble that she was prevailed upon to retire, and the affair nearly caused a diplomatic incident.

In general the Corps Diplomatique contrived to get itself into hot water on several occasions. For instance, when they came to present their congratulations to the sovereigns after the coronation. Ladies were not supposed to appear, but several of them, in Court dress, accompanied their husbands, among them kind, genial Mme. Waddington. Great was the consternation when one saw them, and the Empress was appealed to as to what was to be done with them. She at once said she would receive them, and she did it so graciously, that they did not notice their presence had not been desired.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the curious and interesting people who were gathered together in Moscow during these days. All the world was represented there, and one met side by side the Duke of Aosta, formerly King of Spain, and the Duke of Montpensier, once pretender to the Spanish Crown. The Papal Nuncio sat next to a Protestant minister, or a Greek bishop. All kinds of men and women were assembled there, who, under different circumstances, would never have dreamt even of exchanging a word with one another. It was, indeed, a marvellous gathering. Among the notable personages I became acquainted with was the Papal Nuncio, Mgr. (at present Cardinal) Vincenzo Vanutelli, of whom I have just spoken. He had all the Italian courtesy, and at the same time the *finesse* which has always distinguished that race. His presence in Moscow had been the subject of much conversation, as it was considered to be a step towards a reconciliation between the Imperial Government and the Holy See. As a result of his visit a kind of *modus vivendi* was arranged, to which Mgr. Vanutelli's tact certainly contributed a good deal. He made himself quickly popular at Court, where, in particular, his deference towards the Empress, whose hand he kissed, much to the scandal of certain Roman Catholics, was much appreciated.

Two other men were the subject of much comment and admiration—they were the Prince of Montenegro and Prince Alexander of Battenberg. The last-named had already quarrelled with the

Russian Government, and his presence in Moscow was connected with the hope of re-establishing more friendly relations than had existed for the last few months. He did not succeed, however. Alexander III., who always disliked him, showed himself obdurate to all attempts at a reconciliation, and whilst most effusive in his attentions towards Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, refused even to speak with the Prince of Bulgaria.

I had known Prince Alexander in Berlin whilst he was an officer in the Garde du Corps. He had often been in my house, and we had frequently danced together. At Moscow we had somehow in that great crowd missed one another, but at a ball at the German Embassy he suddenly noticed me, and, coming up, asked me to dance the cotillon with him. During the dance the poor Prince, in his joy at finding an old friend, began pouring out his sorrows into my sympathetic ears, and after confiding to me his disgust at the way he was being treated, ended by saying that he could become a dangerous enemy if pushed to extremities. To my remark that he would be helped by no one, he replied that he had reason to think he would be supported by German influence. This conversation struck me as being so remarkable that I reported it in a letter the next day to a well-known and influential journalist, who was a great friend of mine, and upon whose discretion I thought I could rely. One may imagine my horror when, a month or so afterwards, I found in the *Times* the whole account of my con-

versation with Prince Alexander, accompanied by the remark that the story had come from a Russian lady. I nearly had a fit, and was more vexed than I had been for a long time. The worst was that Prince Alexander thought I had been privy to this indiscretion, and never forgave me for it. I tried in vain to explain matters; he would not hear anything, and I must confess he had reasons for being angry, for I certainly ought not to have mentioned to any one what he had told to me, and, of course, I could not defend my conduct. But the adventure was a lesson to me, and after that I held my tongue whenever I was made the recipient of confidences of the kind I had received that evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Few more Words about Moscow—The Beginning of the Bulgarian Trouble—Prince Bismarck and the Expulsion of Russian Subjects from Germany—Another Winter in Berlin—The Position of Prince William—Relations with his Father—The Marriage of the Grand Duke of Hesse—I receive a Message from Queen Victoria—Countess Schleinitz—A Summer in Dieppe—Death of Lord Ampthill—The Alexander Dumas—Death of Mme. Lacroix.

I WISH I had space enough to describe the different incidents of the coronation. They were as varied as they were interesting, both from the social and the political point of view. It was during these memorable weeks that the principles which governed the whole of the reign of Alexander III. were laid down. The declaration of policy which he made in his speeches to the representatives of the rural classes, as well as to the deputations of the nobility, was directed towards the same end. He appealed to the different classes of the nation for help in strengthening the Imperial power. After the period of unrest which had marked the last years of the life of Alexander II., Russia experienced a great feeling of relief in finding itself at last ruled by a sovereign who knew what he was doing, and who had a firm grasp of the direction

in which he wished to lead the people whose fate was in his hands. One might not sympathise with the line of conduct of the monarch on whose brow the Imperial crown had just been laid, but it was impossible to say that he did not know himself what he wished or meant to do.

The great merit of Count Tolstoi lay precisely in the fact that he gave to Alexander III. what the latter had lacked during the first weeks which had followed his accession to the throne—faith in himself and faith in the Russian nation. Personally, there are many points in which I did not sympathise with this much-discussed Minister, but it would be unjust to let one's opinions weigh against the undeniable fact that his advent to power gave a solidity to the Government which it had lacked for a long time.

One of the festivities of the coronation which excited the most discussion was the ball offered by the nobility of Moscow to the Emperor. It had been said at first that he would not accept it, and, therefore, when it was officially announced that he had done so, the struggle for invitations became so keen that it is a wonder all the fortunate organizers of the entertainment did not end by becoming inmates of a lunatic asylum. I believe that about four thousand people were asked, and about as many more grumbled because they had been forgotten. But the ball was a great success. I do not remember ever having seen the Empress look more lovely. She talked to me for some time, and I fear must have thought me very impertinent by

the way I stared at her. She was really a radiant vision, in a pale yellow satin dress, embroidered with pearls, some scarlet poppies on her bodice, and marvellous diamonds and sapphires around her throat and in her dark hair. Her manner, too, was particularly gracious, and I do not think she omitted to say a few words to any person she knew in the enormous crowd. The enthusiasm she excited was indescribable, and I am sure no one who remembers that evening will contradict me.

The coronation over, we went to the country for the summer, and late in autumn returned to Berlin. I am not quite sure, my memory as to dates being rather defective, whether it was during the months which followed upon it or a year later that Bulgarian affairs became troublesome. I am inclined to think it was immediately after the return of Prince Alexander to Sofia, especially when I bear in mind the incident I have described about the publication of Sir D. Mackenzie Wallace's article in the *Times*. It is certain that the manner of the Emperor towards the Prince of Battenberg had much to do with the events which subsequently took place. The two men had never liked each other. The Empress Marie Alexandrowna, who was very much attached to her brother, the Prince of Hesse, had always made a great fuss over his children, thus exciting the secret jealousy of her own. Her son, who held all irregular marriages in particular horror, had always looked askance at the Battenbergs, and a few personal incidents which had occurred at the time of the

war had accentuated the hostility which existed between the cousins. The Prince of Bulgaria was of a proud, passionate, ambitious nature; he chafed with impatience under the kind of vassalage in which he was held by the Russian officials appointed to help him officially—to watch him, in reality, as he imagined, not quite, perhaps, without reason. He had come to Moscow with the intention of having a loyal explanation with the Czar, and I believe that if an interview had been granted to him matters would not have come to the pass they did; but Alexander III. absolutely refused to see or speak to the Prince otherwise than officially, and in public, and the latter left Russia, aggrieved at heart, and determined to throw off the Russian yoke at the first opportunity. He was unfortunately encouraged in that line of action by different people in England and Germany, and, great as is my admiration and respect for the late Empress Frederick, I do not think she was quite blameless in the matter. In 1888 Prince Alexander aspired to the hand of the favourite daughter of the Empress Frederick, the Princess Victoria. There were, however, political reasons which rendered—apart from all personal sentiment—such a union inadvisable, and two years later the Princess married Prince Adolf of Schaumburg-Lippe.

We spent a peaceful winter in Berlin, where, owing to Court mourning, the season was a remarkably quiet one. I do not remember whether it was in that year or in the year following that Prince

Bismarck, who had embarked upon a decidedly anti-Russian policy, made up his mind to expel all foreign subjects living within a certain distance from the frontier. The measure, which excited an immense amount of indignation, was eagerly seized upon by Dr. Windthorst and his party, in order to bring about a motion of censure in the Reichstag against the Chancellor, and to challenge the legality of his conduct. Public opinion, of course, sided against the Minister, and the day upon which the motion was to be discussed was eagerly awaited. It was known that several members of the Bundesrath, or Federal Council, were strongly opposed to the application of the Imperial ordinance with which the unpopular measure had been heralded. The debate which it was expected would follow upon the proposal of Dr. Windthorst to remonstrate with the Government as to the illegality of the proceedings taken, was eagerly awaited, and on the day it was to take place, I do not believe there was even standing-room in any of the galleries of the Reichstag. I arrived early, so as to get a good seat in the diplomatic box, where I generally went to listen to the debates. We were crammed, as many human beings as could possibly get in, and among us was one of the members of the Federal Council, who, for some reason or another, had elected not to occupy his usual place in the body of the House. He was rather loud in his denunciations of the Chancellor, and said to us that the Bundesrath was going also to make representations to the Emperor, if the debate that was about to

take place would not make the Government reconsider its position. A French diplomat, who was also a great friend of mine, turned to me, and in a low voice, so as not to be heard, whispered in my ear, 'He will be the first one to applaud the Chancellor; do not believe him.' Events proved the truth of this appreciation.

Just as the President declared the sitting opened, and before even he had proceeded to read the orders of the day, Prince Bismarck, who had entered the House together with the other members of the Ministry, got up, and in a loud ringing voice declared he was the bearer of an Imperial message to the Reichstag. An eager murmur was heard, and expressions of astonishment and curiosity as to what was the nature of the communication could be caught here and there, but there was nothing to do but to get up, according to custom, and to listen to what the Emperor had to say through the lips of his Minister. The excitement was so intense, that even the Socialist leaders forgot for once their usual custom to go out of the House on such occasions, and clustered round the ministerial bench. Prince Bismarck got up. I can see him now, standing erect in his cuirassier uniform with its yellow collar, his immense head in its sharp outlines appearing almost like that of a bulldog against the dark ground of the House. I have never seen him look so imposing; it was terrible to behold that straight jaw, and the determination which the whole figure of the man revealed as he slowly unfolded the paper he held

in his hand, and proceeded to read its contents. These were brief, and to the effect that the Emperor, having been apprised that it was the intention of the Reichstag to discuss his recent ordinances, reminded it that these were issued by him in his position as King of Prussia, and that the Parliament of the Empire had no right whatever to challenge them. If the Prussian Landtag (it had just been adjourned for six months) desired to bring about a debate on the point, it was at liberty to do so; but he could not allow the privileges of the monarchy to be encroached upon, and he would never permit the Reichstag of the Empire to discuss his actions as an independent German sovereign.

A dead silence was the reply to the message. It would be impossible to describe the consternation with which it was received. Prince Bismarck folded the paper: 'I suppose the House will thank his Majesty for his gracious communication,' he said loudly, with an expression of triumph, such as had rarely illuminated his face. Then, without even looking at those he had so completely crushed, he turned on his heels, and went out of the House. As he reached the door, he suddenly looked round, and seeing the members of the Bundesrath sitting glued with surprise to their chairs, beckoned to them with his little finger, in an imperative gesture, which had something of a command, and something of a threat in it. The Bundesrath got up at once, as if pushed from behind by some one, and

meekly, with bowed heads, followed the Chancellor out of the House. A world of things could be guessed from this sudden acquiescence of twenty people to one omnipotent will. The scene was more impressive from what lay behind it, than from what was seen by the public, though this was remarkable enough. I do not think the great personality of Prince Bismarck, nor the proof of his immense and indomitable power, ever shone more fiercely than on this memorable occasion. I looked round: the man who had so loudly boasted of the resistance of the Federal Council to the will of the great Minister, was gone; he, too, had followed his chief. I turned towards my French friend. 'Did I not tell you so?' he said with a smile.

It was during that winter of 1883–1884, that the relations between the Crown Prince and Prince William became more and more strained. Both father and son were to blame for this, but I believe that matters would never have reached the stage they did, had not busybodies tried to make mischief, and had not gossip, as ill-advised as it was ill-natured, fanned feelings of rivalry which did not require other people's help to become acute. Ever since the time when the Crown Prince came into conflict with the old Emperor at the beginning of Prince Bismarck's administration, he had not been able to divest himself of an idea that all his actions were suspected by the King, as well as by the Chancellor. When he saw his son put, so to say, above him, and become the

object of the Emperor's affection to a degree he, the direct heir to the crown, had never been able to attain, he naturally became bitter, though, of course, he never would own to it. On the other hand, Prince William, with the impetuosity of his character, as well as with the self-confidence of extreme youth, felt flattered to see that he was more often listened to than his father, and in his vanity did not understand that he as well as the Crown Prince were but pawns in the game Prince Bismarck was playing for all it was worth.

These family misunderstandings occupied public attention during the whole course of the critical winter of which I am speaking. They were not perhaps known largely abroad, but in the immediate circle of the Royal family they began to be viewed with an apprehension which was the stronger that no one at the time could foresee the course events were destined to take, or suspect that death would claim the Emperor Frederick almost simultaneously with the old King.

One of the great friends of the Crown Prince and Princess at that time was the Countess Schleinitz, the wife of the Minister of the Royal Household. A most gifted woman, devoted to her friends, accomplished, clever, and good, she was the object of Prince Bismarck's special aversion, both on account of her independence of opinions, and of the politics of her husband. Prince Bismarck had begun his diplomatic career under Count Schleinitz, who in the early sixties held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. They had not

agreed, and the Chancellor, with the vindictiveness which was one of the distinctive traits of his character, had never forgiven his former chief. He pushed his resentment indeed so far, that when Count Schleinitz died, in February, 1885, he forbade any of the officials of the Foreign Office who had served under him to assist at his funeral. Countess Schleinitz never mixed herself up in politics, and was more devoted to Wagner, Schopenhauer, and German philosophy, than to intrigue of any kind, but the Chancellor made up his mind she was thwarting his plans, and acting as intermediary between the Crown Prince and Princess and certain members of the opposition in the Reichstag. The political position in regard to interior affairs was at that time becoming every day more and more difficult. The Socialists, in spite of the laws of exception promulgated against them, were gaining ground at each election, and the National Liberal Party was also beginning to be independent of the Government. Prince Bismarck knew that all the sympathies of the heir to the throne were with the last-mentioned, and, to exasperate the Emperor against his son, contrasted the conduct of the latter with that of Prince William, who was represented as being in perfect conformity with the opinions and politics of his grandfather. Some painful incidents occurred, such as the abrupt dismissal by the King of Mr. Normann, who was at at the head of the Crown Prince's household. Rightly or wrongly, the Crown Princess fancied

that her eldest son had something to do with the affair, and showed him her displeasure in various ways, so that, with one thing or another, matters were not in a very pleasant state at the Court of Berlin at the time I am speaking of. It was also in the spring of 1884 that another extraordinary incident occurred, in which I found myself mixed up, in a most unforeseen and, to me, disagreeable manner.

In April of that year, Princess Victoria of Hesse was married at Darmstadt to her cousin, Prince Louis of Battenberg. Queen Victoria came over for the ceremony, to which the Crown Prince and Princess also repaired. Their absence was to last a week, if not more, when we were all startled by hearing they had returned to Berlin immediately after the ceremony. The astonishment became only greater when it was known that the reason for their abrupt departure from Darmstadt was due to the fact that the Grand Duke of Hesse had contracted a second marriage on the very day the nuptials of his daughter were celebrated, and that the Queen of England, exasperated at his audacity, was doing all that was in her power to have that union annulled. So far the affair left me indifferent until, to my dismay, I heard that the lady on whom the choice of the Grand Duke had fallen, was my own cousin.

Her name was Madame de Kolémine; she was the grand-daughter of my uncle Henry Rzewuski, consequently my father's great-niece. Married at

a very early age to a Russian diplomat, M. de Kolémine, she had the reputation of being a lovely as well as a clever woman. Her husband was attached to the Legation at Darmstadt, and my cousin very soon became the friend of the young Princesses of Hesse, especially of the eldest of them, Princess Victoria, who wrote most affectionate letters to her, which read strangely when, later on, they came to be contrasted with the events that followed.

Madame de Kolémine's marriage did not turn out a happy one, and she sued her husband for a divorce. The Grand Duke Louis fell in love with her, and asked her to marry him. Here comes the extraordinary part of this extraordinary story. Had the couple chosen a quiet moment to become united, it is probable that the affair would have passed off as so many of the same kind do; but by a strange aberration of spirit, and a complete forgetfulness of the rules of common sense, the Grand Duke elected to be married when all his family were gathered together for the wedding of his daughter. His own marriage was scarcely performed when the Queen was informed of it. What happened afterwards I cannot tell, for I never knew. Pressure of some kind, without doubt, must have been exercised over him, because he consented to an order being signified to his bride to leave Darmstadt immediately, and she was compelled, almost by force, to do so.

I did not know my cousin except by hearsay, but nevertheless this romance was, as can well be

imagined, not at all pleasant to me. The reader will therefore understand that my annoyance changed almost to dismay, when I received, a few days later, a visit from Lady Ampthill the wife of the British Ambassador, who brought me a message from no less a personage than Queen Victoria herself concerning my cousin, and asking me to write a certain letter to my father on the subject of his niece. I do not feel at liberty to explain here the nature of the Queen's request. It is enough to say that the message was brought to me, and that if the nature of it was known, it would cause a certain degree of astonishment.

Of course I transmitted to my father what I was asked in her Majesty's name to do, and a few days later Madame de Kolémine herself arrived in Berlin, and wrote to me asking me to come and see her. Much to my husband's anger I went, and found a very pretty woman, absolutely different from what I had expected. She wished to have an interview with Lord Ampthill, but he declined to see her, in which he was quite right, for the matter had passed out of his hands, and in his official position he could hardly have become mixed up in it. I had, therefore, to tell Madame de Kolémine that I could do nothing for her, and withdrew myself from the whole business, though, of course, I forwarded the Queen's message to my father, and received her Majesty's thanks conveyed through Lady Ampthill. My cousin, with whom an

arrangement was ultimately made, received the title of Baroness Romrod and a pension, and very soon afterwards she married another Russian diplomat, with whom I believe she leads a most happy life. I never saw her again after these Berlin interviews.

That same summer we went to Dieppe, and whilst there saw a good deal of Lord and Lady Salisbury, who possessed a châlet at Puys, as well as of Alexandre Dumas, who also had a little villa there. It was about half an hour's distance from Dieppe. Madame Alexandre Dumas was a Russian. It was through my aunt, Madame Jules Lacroix, that she became acquainted with Dumas, and the story of their marriage is so curious that I think it can well find a place in these reminiscences.

Madame Narischkine, for this was the name of the lady who ultimately became the wife of the famous dramatist, was distantly related to my father's first wife—at least I think so, though I am not quite sure on this point; but what I am certain of, is that she was a great friend of his, and that when she started for Paris he gave her a letter for his sister. My aunt, always glad to make new acquaintances, welcomed Madame Narischkine, then a young and pretty widow, most effusively, and they saw a good deal of each other. One day she invited her to dinner, and among the guests was young Dumas. When her Russian friend was gone, my aunt asked him what he thought of her, to which he replied, 'Elle me plait, car je crois qu'elle a tous les vices.' A few weeks passed after

this remark was made, and my aunt began to wonder that neither Madame Narischkine nor Dumas came any more to see her, when she was startled one morning by hearing they had just been married to one another. The curious part of the story is that they never came to see my aunt afterwards, nor made any attempt to approach her.

When I made her acquaintance, Madame Dumas was quite an old woman, and the picture of untidiness, going about in wrappers, with all the buttons and hooks missing, and her hair curled in little rags of paper, which gave her a funny, and certainly not attractive, appearance. But her manner was charming, and her conversation most amusing. As for Dumas himself, he was, of course, one of the most delightful men in Paris, and I do not think I ever met one who was more entertaining, in spite of the paradoxes with which his talk abounded. We used to see that agreeable couple very often, and I remember one day when I was returning to Dieppe, Dumas accompanied me part of the way, and we stopped near a stile on the road, and started an argument, which, I believe, lasted fully more than an hour, to the stupefaction of the passers-by, who I am sure must have wondered to see us talking like that on the road. The subject of our talk was—I remember it well—the famous *Visite de Noces*, one of Dumas' best pieces, and certainly the one he liked the best himself.

Lady Salisbury also enjoyed Dumas' conver-

sations, and the brilliancy with which he conducted any kind of discussion. Her intelligent mind, perhaps even more remarkable than was his own, knew how to appreciate the flashes of genius, which appeared under all his paradoxes. Just as witty, and with more earnestness in her character than the French dramatist, she was exactly the kind of person to bring out his best points, and it was certainly a great treat to hear them discuss any subject together.

The Salisburys led a quiet life at Dieppe, and they were, perhaps, seen there to greater advantage than at Hatfield House, where the burden of their great position was more or less always weighing upon them. They saw but very few people, and hardly went anywhere. The papers used to arrive at Puys a few hours later than at Dieppe, and so I remember it was I who told Lady Salisbury at the races, where she had driven, the news of the death of Lord Ampthill, which I had just read in the *Figaro* before leaving our house. She was very much shocked, as, indeed, we all were. Apart from the serious blow to his country, the loss of Lord Ampthill, at a comparatively early age, came to all his friends—and he had only friends—as a personal grief. Few men were possessed of more solid qualities, and few of them united to the same degree the gifts of a most remarkable training, with those other advantages which help so much to make a person attractive from a worldly point of view. He had tact, a consummate knowledge of the world, and a cour-

tesy which never failed him on any occasion, or in any circumstance. To none of his friends did his death come as a greater blow than to the Crown Prince and Princess, for whom he had always professed a devotion and attachment which had often helped them through the difficulties which were perpetually thrown in their path. Had Lord Ampthill been alive, it is probable that many a trial would have been spared to the Empress Frederick, and many a mistake made by herself, or her friends on her behalf, would have been avoided. His loss was, for her, irreparable.

At that time the Liberals were in power in England, and so I could, without fear of being indiscreet, ask Lady Salisbury who she thought would be appointed in Berlin as Ambassador; she replied she could not have an idea, but that if she had had anything to do with it, she would have suggested Lord Lytton. I often thought of this remark, and did not, in consequence, experience the same astonishment as the rest of the world, when, after Lord Lyons' retirement in 1887, Lord Lytton was appointed to Paris by Lord Salisbury, then again at the head of the Government.

Our holiday in Dieppe ended in September, and after a short stay in Paris with my aunt, Madame Lacroix, I returned to Berlin, where the winter of 1885 was to prove more eventful for me than the preceding one. I little guessed, when I took leave of my aunt, that I should never see her again. She died the following July, and with her died too a good deal of the pleasure I always ex-

perienced when I went to Paris. I was to visit the gay city often enough in later years, but all the remembrances of my childhood which had made it so dear to me were gone, and my early associations broken up. My yearly visits to France became mere pleasure trips, taken only for amusement. The reasons which had made me look forward to them so eagerly, disappeared with this last survivor of another epoch in the history of French society.

CHAPTER XV.

Brussels and Madame de Villeneuve — We spend a Part of the Winter in St. Petersburg — Death of Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia and of Field-Marshal von Manteuffel — The Appointment of his Successor — Various Intrigues — Death of Prince Orloff, Russian Ambassador in Berlin — The Celebration of Prince Bismarck's Seventieth Birthday.

I DO not think I have spoken of a short stay we made in Brussels with my husband in 1883, just before the Moscow Coronation. At least I think it was in 1883, but it might also have been one or two years before that time: I have never had a memory for dates. We went there to see some American friends of mine, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Fish, who represented the United States at the Court of King Leopold. We spent a few pleasant days in the Belgian capital, and it was there I met a woman whose radiant beauty made an impression upon me that I have never been able to forget. I am speaking of the Countess de Villeneuve, whose supreme loveliness is remembered by all those who knew her, as one of the most extraordinary things in this world. Her face, with its Madonna-like expression, had not one feature which could be criticised, or even not admired. No Greek sculptor ever devised any-

thing more perfect. When she entered a room, dressed in white, with diamond stars in her dark hair, it seemed as if a goddess had suddenly appeared. Every other woman became insignificant beside her. Where she was, she reigned alone, with a sway which has never been contested during her whole life.

The British Minister in Brussels was Mr. (afterwards Sir) Savile Lumley, whom I was to meet years later in Rome, where he occupied the post of British Ambassador. He had made himself very popular in the Belgian capital, and used to entertain a good deal with the most charming hospitality. His Austrian colleague was Count Bohuslaw Chotek, a cousin of my husband's, and both he and his amiable wife did all they could to make our stay in Brussels as pleasant as possible. Their numerous daughters were not married at that time, and no one suspected that a certain young lady just then emerging from childhood into the dignity of being considered grown up, would one day fill a very exalted position indeed, and win the heart of the heir to the Hapsburg monarchy.

My father's birthday was on Christmas Eve, according to the Russian almanac, that is on the 5th of January according to ours. We left Berlin on the day following upon the Occidental New Year, and arrived in the Russian capital in time for the celebration of this family festivity. I remember it particularly, for it was the last time we spent it all together with my father. My

elder brother had arrived in St. Petersburg from Central Asia at that same time, and we once more lived over again all the remembrances of our childhood.

St. Petersburg was very gay that winter. The young Empress was known to be passionately devoted to dancing, and everybody who could aspire to the honour gave balls, which she and the Emperor were asked to grace with their presence. Alexander III. hated these kind of festivities, but he bore such tediousness with the greatest good nature, and seemed to enjoy the sight of the Empress dancing far into the small hours, with a zest and *entrain* which of course everybody imitated. Occasionally, however, even the kind sovereign had enough of it, and the remembrance of a certain ball at the Anitchkoff Palace, his private residence, is still treasured among the memories of that winter, when, finding it did not come to an end, Alexander III. sent away one musician after the other until the last one was dismissed, and the cotillon, which had provoked this explosion of wrath, had perforce to stop too.

Whilst we were in St. Petersburg the Afghan question became suddenly acute. My brother was, as I have already told, in the Russian capital on leave. He was suddenly ordered to return at once to his regiment, quartered at a place called Askhabad, in Central Asia. We were very much dismayed on hearing this decision of the military authorities, especially as

my brother had not had a long leave since the Turkish War. The evening we received this unwelcome news I happened to meet, at a ball at the British Embassy, Prince Dondoukoff Korsakoff, at that time Governor-General of the Caucasus, and through asking him whether it would not be possible for my brother to stay a few days longer with us, I got into a fearful mess. It seems that the recall of officers on leave was to be kept as secret as possible, and I had put my foot in it, especially considering the place I had chosen to mention it in.

My brother left at once, and very soon after his departure the different frontier incidents happened which so very nearly brought us to war with England. The English press behaved, I must say, in a spiteful manner about it, and did its very best to embitter relations between the two countries. As an example of its attitude I will relate the following incident:—

When my brother returned to Askhabad, he found he had nothing to do there, and after a few months spent in idleness, he at last got twelve days' leave. He could, of course, do nothing with them, as it took about that time to reach any civilised place. The thought struck him he could go on a little excursion to the Persian town of Mesched, which he had never seen, and which was supposed to be a most interesting place. Accordingly, he set out with half-a-dozen Cossacks, crossed the mountains, and after having bought a few carpets returned to Askhabad, without any one,

least of all himself, having thought there could be anything worth attracting attention in this journey. A few weeks later, I was much amused to read in the *Times* that Russia had evidently dark designs on Persia, because a Cossack officer, enjoying the fullest confidence of the Government, had recently been with a formidable escort to Mesched, in order to draw plans of the town and surrounding country. Now, my brother could not have drawn a plan to save his life, and he belongs to the kind of happy-go-lucky people, whom no one with the least knowledge of human nature would ever dream of sending upon any mission of the character which the great London journal had attributed to him. I have narrated this incident just to show what degree of reliance can be placed upon the information given in the best English papers, in matters relating to Russia and Russian affairs.

We returned to Berlin in time for the last Court ball of the season, and Lent went on just as usual with the Empress's Thursday concerts and the habitual round of diplomatic entertainments, which were a feature of that season of the year. In March, my father's step-grandson, Prince Orloff, died on his property near Paris, whither he had gone to try and get cured from the painful disease to which he succumbed, at an age when one could have hoped that his services would be spared for a long time to his country. He had been appointed Russian Ambassador at Berlin a few months before, and had hardly been able to

occupy his post. He was one of Prince Bismarck's few personal friends, and, when the Hartmann incident obliged him to leave Paris, the Prince asked that he might be sent to the German capital, in succession to Baron d'Oubril, who had for many years represented Russia at the Court of the Emperor William, and was at last retiring. Prince Orloff was a most attractive man. He had lost one of his eyes during the Crimean war, and the black bandage which he wore seemed rather to add to the distinction of his features. He was one of our most brilliant diplomats, and certainly deserved the great reputation he enjoyed. Personally I regretted him very much. Though there was no actual relationship between us, yet as my father had always considered him as a member of his family, this circumstance had led to a certain intimacy between us. His early demise was a great shock to my father, who, of course, had never expected to survive him.

It was two or three days after the death of Prince Orloff, that the German Chancellor celebrated his seventieth birthday. The occasion was made the pretext for a great demonstration of loyalty throughout the Empire towards the man who had called it into existence. The students of the University organized a torchlight procession, and the Emperor presented to his Minister a copy of Werner's picture of the proclamation of the German Empire in Versailles. The old monarch himself offered it to Prince Bismarck.

He was accompanied by the various members of his family, and in a few words he expressed the gratitude he, as well as his house and the country over which he ruled, had for the great man whose genius had given the Empire unity, and the Hohenzollerns the Imperial Crown. The scene was most impressive, and certainly can be called one of the great ones of Prince Bismarck's great life.

We went, of course, to view the procession of which I have already spoken. Count Radolinski, now Prince Radolin, and German Ambassador in Paris, had asked us to come and see it from his windows, which opened on Unter den Linden, the principal thoroughfare in Berlin. It was a great sight, and a curious demonstration from what was then the coming generation. Prince Bismarck was nowhere more popular than among students, and the different Universities in Germany. It was there that his gigantic efforts for the consolidation of the Empire had been most appreciated, and it was among the so-called learned classes of society that his great work was viewed as it ought to have been—that is, seen as a whole, and not in all its details.

Death was very busy among the people I knew in the year 1885. In June, Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia, the famous Red Prince of the Franco-German War, went to his rest after a short but painful illness. His disappearance removed from the world a man who had filled in it a place at once larger and smaller than he deserved. As

a military man the Prince was a genius; but the inactivity in which he was forced to live, after the final triumph of the German arms, weighed upon his mind. He was not liked, and he knew it well. His relations with his wife, which at the best could be called strained, had a good deal to do with the opinion which the crowd held about him, and his brusque manners made him many foes. I have always held to the opinion that Prince Frederick Charles belonged to those unhappy people who are always misunderstood, whatever they do, or attempt to do. In life he was disliked, in death he was not regretted.

Almost at the same time he passed away, another hero of the war of 1870 went to his rest. I am speaking of Field-Marshal Manteuffel, certainly one of the greatest men of modern German history. For several years prior to his death, he had occupied the responsible position of Governor of the conquered Provinces of Alsace-Lorraine, and by his wise administration of them, he made for himself a name in history such as very few attain. He was the only personage in the German Empire who dared to put his opinion against that of Prince Bismarck, and certainly he never allowed the Chancellor to lord it over him, as he did over everybody else. Baron von Manteuffel was a very cultured man, and one who possessed the rare gift of putting himself in another person's place, and of looking at things with different eyes than his own. His impartiality was most extra-

ordinary, and his common sense and judgment so exceptional, that they always overweighed any preferences he might have had. Appointed Governor of the annexed Provinces with almost unlimited power, he used it only in the sense of conciliation and moderation. Whilst admiring Prince Bismarck, he had yet never sympathised with him, nor with the means he used to ensure success to his plans. His moral convictions were of a very high order, and he would never have consented to certain compromises of conscience which Prince Bismarck not only accepted, but believed to be quite legitimate. Field-Marshal von Manteuffel was a strength to any political party with whom he chose to ally himself, but one of his strongest points was that he refused to join any of them, but went on doing his duty as a soldier and as a servant of his King.

His death, coming as it did most unexpectedly, was a great source of embarrassment to the Government. It was not easy to find a successor to him, and it was discussed whether a prince of the Royal family would not be the best choice which could be made under the circumstances. Some one, I could not tell who, mooted the idea, and suggested that the Crown Prince would be the proper person to appoint as Lieutenant of the Emperor in Alsace-Lorraine. Prince Bismarck, at first, was rather inclined to take the same view, perhaps because he knew that failure was sure to attend this effort at conciliation. But William I., when consulted, at once declared himself against

it. He was by principle opposed to the heir to his throne being given any responsible position in which he could make a name for himself, and he distrusted his son's French and English sympathies. He refused his consent to the proposal with an alacrity which he would have done better, perhaps, not to express so openly. It was at this juncture that some one suggested that Prince William of Prussia should be appointed as successor to Field-Marshal von Manteuffel.

Prince Bismarck did not take kindly to the suggestion at first. He was opposed by principle to any kind of authority being given to a member of the Royal family. Perhaps he felt that with them it would be impossible for him to exert his authority in the way he liked to do. Perhaps, also, he did not care to let his favourite pupil escape from his immediate influence. But when the Emperor consulted him on the subject he had not the courage to say no, and, on the contrary, he expressed the hope that the appointment, if made, would prove beneficial to the interests of the Empire.

At this juncture another kind friend took it upon himself to inform the Crown Prince of what was going on. The latter's indignation can be guessed sooner than described. He went at once to see his father, and declared that he absolutely objected to his son being given an authority which had been constantly refused to himself. In spite of his displeasure, the Emperor had to bow down to the reasons invoked by his son, and Prince

Hohenlohe was offered the responsible position of Governor of Alsace-Lorraine. Prince William, who, of course, heard what had happened, became very angry, not with his father, but with his mother, whom he accused of having interfered in this affair, and urged the Crown Prince to express his disapproval of it in the energetic way he did. I happen to know positively that the Crown Princess had heard nothing about the projected appointment of her eldest son. No one had ventured to mention to her the rumours which were circulating on the subject, and the Crown Prince, when he repaired to the Emperor, had done so without letting the Princess know anything about it. Prince William's anger against his mother was as unjust as it was unwarranted; but this episode, exposing as it did the rivalries which existed in the Royal family, influenced its destinies in a way the Crown Princess little suspected.

CHAPTER XVI.

Appointment of Count Schouwaloff as Russian Ambassador in Berlin — Our Dinner in his Honour — Its Consequences — The Marriage of M. Bernard von Bulow, the present German Chancellor — The Epidemic of Measles — I nearly die from them — My Husband's serious Illness — Last Interview with the Crown Prince — We are ordered to Egypt for my Husband's Health — Our Winter there — First Rumours about the Crown Prince's dangerous State of Health.

When Prince Orloff died, the question of his successor became a most important one. Relations between the Russian and German Governments were very strained at that time, and it was recognised on both sides that a great deal depended upon the personalities of the men who had to preside over them. I think it was the Emperor William himself who suggested the appointment of Count Schouwaloff, as a man likely to smooth over any difficulties that might arise to accentuate the strained situation. Count Schouwaloff had a brilliant military reputation. He was aide-de-camp-general to the Emperor, and through his brother, Count Peter, the former Ambassador in London and Plenipotentiary at the Congress, he possessed a great deal more knowledge of the working of European politics than any other military man, and it was decided in principle that the new Ambassador was to be a military man. Count

Schouwaloff arrived in Berlin, and very soon made himself popular; his wife contributed a good deal to his success, and was of the greatest help to him in the difficult position he had to face. In connection with the Schouwaloffs, an incident occurred which will curiously illustrate the watchfulness exercised by Prince Bismarck over the members of the diplomatic body.

We had asked the new Ambassador to dinner. It was not an official entertainment, and consequently only a few pleasant people were present to meet the Count and Countess. Among them was the Bavarian Minister, Count Lerchenfeld, as well as a great friend of mine, Count Neipperg, a grandson of the second husband of the Empress Marie Louise, the consort of the great Napoleon. Count Neipperg was an extremely pleasant man, but he belonged to the Centre, or Catholic, party in the Reichstag, where he sat among the adversaries of the Government. I must confess I had not given a thought to his political opinions, and had never admitted the possibility that they could have anything to do with the fact of his being asked to dinner. What was my surprise when a few days later I received a visit from one of Prince Bismarck's lieutenants, who gave me to understand that the Chancellor was very angry with me for having asked Count Neipperg to dinner, together with the Schouwaloffs, and that he hoped I would never do such a thing again. One may imagine my indignation. Of course I replied to the Chancellor's ambassador that I could not admit any in-

terference with my guests, and that I should never dream of consulting him as to the choice of them. This instance will illustrate the despotic sway which the powerful Minister believed he had the right to exercise, even upon people who, like myself, had absolutely nothing to do with politics, and no official position whatever.

That dinner to Count and Countess Schouwaloff was, in general, attended with disaster. Count Lerchenfeld, who had accepted our invitation, forgot all about it, and, after we had waited more than an hour, we had to sit down to table without him, which, of course, upset the whole of our arrangements, so that my first attempt at hospitality towards the new representative of my country was anything but a social success.

That same winter Berlin society was very much excited over the marriage of the present German Chancellor, Count (then Herr) Bernard von Bulow, with Countess Donhoff, *née* Princess Camporeale, the stepdaughter of the famous Minghetti. Countess Donhoff had always had the reputation of being a clever and charming woman, and no one deserved it better. Her divorce from Count Donhoff had attracted a good deal of attention at the time it took place, but no one had thought of linking another man's name with it. When, therefore, the news of her marriage with young Bulow, as he was called, was announced, it was a nine days' wonder. The couple were singularly well matched. It would be out of place for me to say anything

in praise of the present German Chancellor. His reputation is too well established.

This same winter of 1885–6 was signalised by a most extraordinary epidemic of measles, which became prevalent among the smart section of Berlin society. I was one of the first attacked, and very nearly died from them. No one knew whence the disease originated. Every day one heard of some well-known person being stricken by it, and at last it became a kind of sport to count who had escaped, and who had fallen a victim to this troublesome complaint.

The Crown Prince had never had the measles in his life before, and was exceedingly frightened of them. Of course, at the age he had reached the illness was bound to prove serious, and when it became known that he had caught it too, great anxiety prevailed as to the consequences it might have on the general state of his health. He recovered, however, but his throat remained delicate for ever afterwards, and there is no doubt whatever that it was this illness which was the beginning of the one to which he eventually succumbed two years later.

I had scarcely recovered, when my husband fell ill too with malarial fever, which very nearly carried him off. For weeks he lay between life and death, until at last the doctors advised us to go and spend the next winter in Egypt, where it was hoped the warm and dry climate might do him good. We therefore made up our minds to break up our Berlin home and go away for a

year or so. I did not anticipate, however, that this break-up was to become a definite one, and that my life in Berlin had come to an end.

One of the persons I used to see a good deal of was the Countess Schleinitz. About a year before the time I am speaking of her husband died, and as soon as her period of mourning for him had come to an end, she married Count Wolkenstein, then Austrian Ambassador in St. Petersburg. I had gone to Paris to see my friends there, but came back the morning of her wedding in order to be present at the ceremony. It was at the breakfast which followed that I saw the Crown Prince for the last time, and that I had with him the remarkable conversation I have already related in connection with the death of King Louis of Bavaria, and the position which, according to his ideas, German sovereigns ought to occupy in relation to the Empire. The interview I had with Frederick III. did not leave me the impression of any illness or lack of strength in him. He had certainly grown thinner, and complained of a delicate throat, but no one thought for one moment that it could be anything else but the result of the measles, which, attacking him as they did at an age when one is generally free from ailments of the kind, were bound to leave a certain amount of weakness behind them.

We spent the summer in Russia, and after a brief visit I made to St. Petersburg to bid goodbye to my father, whom I was very loth to leave for such a long time, we embarked at Odessa for

Constantinople and Alexandria on board a Russian steamer called the *Czar*. We had a fearful crossing to Constantinople, so fearful that my brother who had met us at Odessa, with the intention of accompanying us to Egypt, flatly refused to do so, and declared that nothing would induce him to spend another week at sea and endure the tortures he had suffered. It must be owned that we had a very rough voyage, and I believe that, with the exception of a certain Mr. Schmidt, the head of the Custom House in Alexandria—a very pleasant man—and myself, every one on board was sick. It was with a feeling of intense relief that we anchored in the Bosphorus, and went to seek our old haunts of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, where the celebrated Missiri welcomed us with his beaming smile and his indifferent food.

We stayed two days in Constantinople, and it was then that I experienced, for the first time, the disappointment with which one looks back on the scene of former pleasures when circumstances have changed, and the people who had made them pleasant are dead or gone. Count Corti had left us for that last journey from whence there is no return; the Dufferins were in India. No one remained to talk over the days which had been so pleasant, and though the German Ambassador, Herr von Radowitz, and his wife gave us a warm welcome, and did all they could to entertain us, yet the contrast with my first stay in Constantinople made itself felt at each step, and the impression I carried away from this second visit

was more a painful one than anything else. We went, of course, again to St. Sophia, which I was anxious to show to my little daughters; but there also things had altered, this time for the best, and whereas in 1881 we had needed a kawass, and a special permission, we found that a very small baksheesh would let us in. A peep at the Bazaar, and a walk, or rather drive, around the old walls and the famous Seven Towers, or what remains of them, was about all we did in Constantinople.

We left it in glorious weather, and after a stay of several hours in Smyrna, which struck me as being the most Eastern-looking town I had yet seen, we landed at Alexandria and took up our quarters at the Hôtel Khedivial, the garden of which, with its palm-trees, impressed me most pleasantly. Two days later we went on to Cairo, and very soon were settled there for the winter.

Cairo in 1886 was not quite given up to Cook's tourists to the extent that it is now. Hotels were still few and far between, and Shepheard was the rendezvous of good society. It was most amusing to sit on the terrace and look at the various sights which make Cairo such an exceptional place. We found a number of friends, who did all they could to make our stay amusing and entertaining. Foremost among them was Mr. (now Sir Edgar) Vincent, who most amiably took me over the principal sights of the town. These, of course, proved attractive, and I think I shall never forget my first acquaintance with the desert, and my ride on donkey-back to the cele-

brated tombs of the Caliphs outside Cairo, on one of those lovely moonlight nights one only meets there, which are not comparable to anything else in this world. The desert is, in my opinion, the greatest attraction in Cairo. Rides there possess a peculiar charm which cannot be described, but which I believe has been felt by all those who have had the occasion to enjoy them.

The Pyramids, on the contrary, did not impress me as I had thought they would, perhaps because I had expected so much from them. The Sphinx also was a distinct disappointment, and at first I could not find any beauty in its broken nose and blurred face. It was only months later, as my stay in Egypt was drawing to its close, that suddenly one night the beauty of this marvellous creature burst upon me, and the sensation of it has never left me since. I should always advise people in search of the secret of the Sphinx to see it first by moonlight. Then, and then only, does one realise all that its figure means, and the spell which it is bound to exercise over all those who give a thought to the great hereafter which awaits us all.

Cairo was then, as it is now, a very gay place. The French Consul-General was Count d'Aunay, whose wife, an American, Miss Burdan, the sister of Mrs. Marion Crawford, was an old acquaintance of mine. She was extremely pretty and attractive, and I saw a good deal of her, and remember with great pleasure and genuine gratitude the kindness I experienced at her hands.

England had already as her diplomatic agent Lord Cromer, who had not yet received that title, and was known as Sir Evelyn Baring. He was the same man then as he is now, and I have seldom seen any one who has changed so little in the course of long years. His wife, Lady Baring, was, of course, the leading lady in Cairo society, and her house was certainly the most hospitable one there. She had more tact than any other living woman, and had only friends. Her exquisite courtesy corrected much that was off-hand and even brusque in her husband's manners, and invitations to the British Agency were most eagerly sought after, by all the new arrivals, as well as by the old residents of Cairo.

At the time I am speaking of, England, though she had made up her mind to stay in Egypt, had not yet openly acknowledged that intention, and speculations were rife as to the probable length of her occupation of the country. The political situation was rather strained between the French and English Governments, and I believe that neither of the representatives of the two Powers had altogether a pleasant time of it. The Khedive was but a docile instrument in the skilful hands of Sir Evelyn Baring, and though the latter sometimes experienced opposition to certain of his plans from the wary Nubar Pacha, yet he contrived generally to have his own way.

Nubar Pacha, who occupied the responsible position of Prime Minister, was one of the most curious types of men it has been my fortune

to meet. He had all the cunning of the Armenian race to which he belonged, combined with the advantages of a European education, and being, moreover, the only man among the Khedive's advisers who could be called a statesman, he managed sometimes to hold his own against the obstinate and shrewd British Agent-General. Personally old Nubar was most attractive, his intercourse was absolutely fascinating, and his knowledge not only of all the finesses of the French language, but also of the kind of blague and bagout of the boulevards, added to the wit of his conversation. Madame Nubar had the gift as well as the love of entertaining, and her two charming daughters, the youngest married to Tigrane Pacha, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, as well as her sister, Madame Capamadgian, helped their mother with an exquisite grace to do the honours of her house. Twice a week there were evening receptions, *dans la maison Nubar*, as it was called, and no one who could help it ever missed one of these entertainments, at which one was sure to meet all the interesting people who were either living in, or had arrived as visitors to, Cairo.

It was at the Nubars' that I saw, for the first time, Lord Rosebery, then on his way home from India, where he had spent some months together with Lady Rosebery, and the Earl, now Duke, of Fife. Their arrival in Cairo had made quite a little commotion, and, of course, they were the objects of general curiosity.

The receptions of the Vicereine were quite a feature in the social life of Cairo: they used to take place every Tuesday, and it would have been hard to realise that one was in an Oriental harem, had it not been for the female attendants in their Eastern dresses who met the visitors, and escorted them to their mistress. The Khediviah, as she was called, was a very pretty woman, always exquisitely dressed in the latest Parisian fashion, speaking French perfectly, and in manners and bearing quite like any high born and bred European great lady. In general the Princesses of the Khedivial family were admirably brought up, and in no way different from women having had all the advantages of life, such as we understand them. The severe rules which still prevail in Constantinople as to the liberty enjoyed by women do not exist in Egypt, where practically the only restraint imposed on females is the obligation of wearing a very thin and transparent veil when they go out. They occupy boxes at the opera, from whence they can assist at the representations, and behind the curtains of which one can see them very well. When the Khedive gave his annual ball, the Vicereine used to look at the entertainment from behind a screen, and to summon to her presence all the ladies she knew, for a cup of tea and a few moments' chat. Tewfik Pacha himself was a quiet, morose man, who used to feel bitterly his helplessness in the matter of the government of his country. He was neither amusing nor enter-

taining, from a worldly point of view, and I remember that when I was asked to dine at the Abdin Palace I tried in vain every subject of conversation I thought would be likely to suit him, without the least success. Every remark I made fell flat, until at last I gave it up and turned in despair to my other neighbour, who was the German Consul-General, Count Arco.

Count Arco deserves special mention. He was considered one of the cleverest men in the service, and would probably, had he not died at an early age, have had a brilliant career. He belonged to the number of Prince Bismarck's personal friends, and at a moment when it required a great amount of courage to do so, he had gone to see him at Friedrichsruhe, for which he had almost been dismissed from the diplomatic service.

Among the many notabilities of Cairo, the Princess Nazli, cousin of the Khedive, certainly ranked among the foremost. She was an extraordinary mixture of European education blended with Eastern ideas. She had completely emancipated herself from the few restraints imposed on her sex, and used to receive male visitors every afternoon at her house. Her teas, as one called them, were among the most amusing gatherings in Cairo, and nothing struck one as more strange than to see an English officer, or foreign diplomat, introduced by a slave in gorgeous garments into the presence of the amiable Princess, whose dress, by a strange peculiarity, had more of the Oriental character than that of the other

ladies in the Khedivial family. Princess Nazli was a power in politics, and a strong supporter of the English occupation. Her opinions were not looked upon with unmixed approbation by Tewfik Pacha, and Nubar was loud in his execration of them, but the Turkish custom of ignoring women did not permit the Government to openly express its disapproval of the conduct of Princess Nazli, and this allowed her to air her views with perfect impunity. She was very clever, and used to make fun of those whom she did not like in a comic sort of way which was most amusing.

Society in Cairo was a perfect kaleidoscope of new faces and strange encounters. In those winter months I came across men like the Père Didon, who had just incurred the blame of the Papal Court, and who was on his way back from the Holy Land, where he had been collecting materials for his life of Christ. I remember having had a conversation with him on board a boat which was taking us to Memphis, together with a large party, on the divinity of Jesus. I could not ask him, of course, what he really thought about it, but I remember one curious remark he made to me, and which has often haunted me since. It was to the effect that he thought Christ cared more for people doing what He told them than believing in His divine personality.

Hamilton Aïdé was also a visitor to Cairo during that winter, delightful and charming as he ever is, and his presence was eagerly sought after at all the entertainments, of which the name

was legion, which were given by the different leaders of society; and the Brasseys, too, whose *Sunbeam* was at Port Said, made a flitting apparition in the Egyptian capital, from whence Lady Brassey started on that sad journey of which she was not destined to see the end. And one day I was shown, at a reception at the British Legation, a young officer, arrived that same morning from Suakim, on a short visit, who in later years was to become Lord Kitchener of Khartoum.

Yes, these were merry days, and I sometimes have reproached myself for my gaiety at that time, though perhaps it is well it was granted to me. I was in despair when the time came to bid good-bye to Egypt and its many attractions, and went round with a heavy heart to see once more all the spots which I liked best. Mr. (now Sir A.) Hamilton Lang, then at the head of the Daira Sanieh, took us for a farewell excursion to the Tomb of Ti and the pyramids of Sakharah; and I think I shall never forget the desert as it looked that night white and still under the rays of the moon. I sat for a long time at the window of Mariette's little house staring at this immensity, which suddenly seemed to make me realise that of the world, and the nothingness of human ambitions, and human life. There is a solemnity in the desert it is difficult to describe. It is not as if centuries stared at one from its immensity; it is more like as if one stared oneself at its vastness, and all that it represents in the history, as well as in the fate of mankind.

I have said nothing about the various mosques and monuments which make Cairo such a wonderful and interesting place. I have only a vivid remembrance of my visit to the Mussulman University of El Azar, because it is the only place where I was distinctly insulted by some dervishes, in spite of the kavass from the Consulate who accompanied me. But in this centre of Mohammedan fanaticism the presence of a European lady excited such indignation, that I was greeted with all kind of epithets, which were, so far as I understood them, anything but complimentary.

As a contrast to this reception, I was warmly welcomed at the house of the Scheik El Sadad, one of the notabilities of Cairo, whose family is supposed to be descended in a straight line from the Prophet. He asked me to come and dine with his wife, or rather wives—he had three of them—and in a rash moment I accepted. The meal was very elaborate, being a true Oriental one, partaken at a small table, and with the help of a spoon only, without knives and forks. If I remember rightly, I think we had something like seventeen courses, each of which I was compelled to taste.

It was towards the end of our Egyptian winter that rumours, vague at first, then more and more decided, reached us as to the state of health of the Crown Prince, and the dreaded word 'cancer' was pronounced. The news came as a stunning blow, but one hoped against hope that the doctors were mistaken, and that it was only a

passing ailment from which he was suffering. His presence in Berlin at the festivities connected with the celebration of the old Emperor's seventieth birthday made us think that, perhaps, after all, the matter was not so serious as it was reported. But even in those early days of the tragedy, towards which we were going with quick paces, my thoughts were never absent from the Crown Princess. I knew what this would mean to her, and what silent agony she must be enduring. I never guessed though to what it would lead, nor suspected the kind of Calvary she was destined to climb.

CHAPTER XVII.

We return to Russia—The Emperor William's Death—The Beginning and End of a Reign—My Father's Death—We settle in St. Petersburg—The First Days of the Empress Frederick's Widowhood—St. Petersburg Society under Alexander III.—Bismarck's Fall—A Season in London—The Duke of York's Wedding.

I RETURNED to Russia in June, 1887, with my children, and my husband joined me there a few months later from Germany, whither he had gone on leaving Cairo. That year proved to be a sad one. My father's health began to fail, and it was evident to all who saw him that the end could not be far off. The news we received from Berlin was also far from being reassuring, and it soon became certain that the Crown Prince's days were also numbered. The person who, I believe, had the fewest illusions on the subject was the Crown Princess herself. I do not think she had any hope from the moment the true nature of the disease under which her husband was struggling was revealed to her. I think that, between the two, it was he who looked more brightly at the terrible situation which stared them both in the face.

The Empress never alluded to it in later years, save in the vaguest way. She had suffered far too much to care to speak of these hours of silent agony, of which the most acute, per-

haps, was the misunderstanding which had grown between herself and her eldest son. Among the many lies that have been said, as well as written, about the Empress, there is one which has come to be accepted as true even by some of her friends, and that is, that she never liked the present German Emperor. Now, so far as I know, she always had for him, at the bottom of her heart, a preference which only added bitterness to the events which alienated them from each other for some time. He represented to her those first emotions of motherhood a woman can never forget in after life; her first hopes, her first joys, had been associated with him; to him she had owed the pride of having presented an heir to the kingdom over which she believed she would have to rule. He had been the object of her tenderest solicitude, of her most affectionate care, and she had been proud of his great talents and abilities.

I was in St. Petersburg when the old Emperor William died. The event, in spite of his great age, came as a shock, not only to those who knew him, but to the world in general. He had come to be considered in the light of an institution, and the possibility of his death occurring before that of his stricken son had scarcely occurred to people as within the limits of probability. With him came to an end a whole period in the history not only of his own country, but also of the world. Upright, conscientious, true, admirably unselfish, William I. will be remembered as a man who, without being

really great, yet achieved great things. He was universally regretted, and even his most bitter foes shed tears over his grave. His son, when he ascended the throne, surprised every one by the energy with which, half-dying, he stuck to his duties, and picked up the reins of government. The two letters he addressed to the German people and to the Chancellor, will for ever be quoted as one of the most admirable programmes a sovereign could unfold on assuming a crown. Unhappily, it was to remain a programme, and the noble spirit whose pen traced those eloquent words, was destined to be quenched almost before they were dry on the paper on which they had been written.

I did not see the Emperor after he ascended the throne. My husband went to take leave of him, as I have already related, and brought me back a message of farewell, which I shall always treasure. He related to me that his composure almost forsook him when he was introduced in the presence of the dying monarch. Indeed, all those who approached Frederick III. were impressed in the like way by the heroic courage with which he waited for death. The Empress, too, was admirable, as she always showed herself during her whole life; her thorough unselfishness never appeared to greater advantage than during those short three months in which she wore the Imperial Crown, and she carried it so far, that she actually left her husband for a few hours to go and superintend herself the relief of the victims of the

inundations of Silesia, and what that supreme sacrifice must have cost her, no one but herself ever knew.

This brief reign of Frederick III. was marked by many anxieties and sorrows. The quarrel which took place between the Empress and Prince Bismarck, concerning the marriage of the Princess Victoria with the Prince of Bulgaria, was certainly one of the things which troubled him the most. Then there happened the Puttkamer incident, and various other small events, which embittered his last days. The marriage of his second son, Prince Henry, with the Princess Irene of Hesse, brought a ray of light into the darkness of the suffering in which his remaining days were spent, but it did not bring him that peace in which his friends would have liked his last hours to pass; and when he died, he was so thoroughly worn out, in mind as well as in body, that it is probable the advent of the dread angel was more of a relief to him than anything else.

On the 29th of April, of that same year 1888, my father died, thus adding another sorrow to those I had already. His death, and some complications which followed upon it, connected with the disposal of his property, obliged us to settle in Russia, where my husband became naturalised. We gave up our Berlin establishment, and took a house in St. Petersburg, and thus my life changed completely, and I returned to the country which I ought never to have left.

It was about that same time that a curious incident occurred which had a certain influence over the politics of Russia, and in which I happened to be accidentally mixed up.

The reader remembers perhaps the episode of certain documents concerning Bulgarian affairs, which were sent to the Emperor Alexander of Russia, and which Prince Bismarck pronounced to be forgeries. Speculation was rife as to who could have given them to the sovereign whose wrath they had excited. I believe that to this day the matter has not been explained. A strange accident put me in possession of the name of the person who performed that daring deed, but this is not the place to mention it. It is sufficient to say here, that the sending of the papers originated from the circle of the immediate friends and supporters of General Boulanger, who was at that time at the height of his popularity. After the Berlin interview, these people, in order to counteract the effect of the repudiations of Prince Bismarck, sent another batch of papers to the Russian Court, by one of the confidants of Boulanger, and by a young lady whose name has often been mentioned since, Miss Maud Gonne, who arrived in St. Petersburg in the spring of that year 1888, and spent some weeks at the Hôtel de l'Europe, where I was staying too. Through an introduction which I procured for her, the documents were handed over to M. Pobedonostseff, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, and by him put under the eyes of Alexander III. The result was the dispatch,

some time later, of the Russian squadron to Toulon.

During the spring that Miss Gonne was staying at the Hôtel de l'Europe, St. Petersburg, Mr. Stead was also in the capital of Russia, and staying at the same hotel. They often used to meet in my rooms, and the talks we had together laid the foundations of my later friendship with Mr. Stead. St. Petersburg society was very brilliant at that time I am speaking of. Though my aunt, the Princess Kotchoubey, had died a few weeks before my father, I had plenty of friends and relations, and, besides all the family ties which made it so dear to me, I found much to interest me in politics, as well as in other things. General Tcherewine, whom I have already mentioned, was one of my greatest friends, together with M. Wischnegradski, the Finance Minister, who was all-powerful. Through them a quantity of information reached me, and gave me grounds for interesting myself, not only in the doings of society, but also in the great work to which Alexander III. devoted all his life, that of ameliorating the condition of the country, for which these were eventful years. The famine of 1891 exercised an immense influence over its development, and whilst arresting it on some points, stimulated its energies in others. Foreign politics, too, underwent a thorough transformation, and the French Alliance, which under Nicholas II. was to become an accomplished fact, was first mooted and discussed. Every day brought a fresh

incident, and it would take volumes to relate all I remember about that time, where, unfortunately, I have got but a few pages.

In 1890 the world was startled by the news that Prince Bismarck had been dismissed by his sovereign. The event came as a thunder-clap to the general public, though all those who had watched the progress of events at the Court of Berlin were more or less prepared for it. For my part, I felt sure the powerful Minister and the young Emperor would not hit it together for a long time. William II. was not the kind of monarch to submit to being kept in bondage, and Bismarck was not one to brook resistance in any shape or form. These two temperaments had to clash, sooner or later, and yet no one expected that the close friends of 1888 would in such a short time become irreconcilable enemies, and the world had a right to expect that the great genius to whom Germany owed its unity would take his banishment with more dignity than he did. Bismarck, becoming the head of the opposition against the Crown—of which he had been the staunchest supporter—was a spectacle no one had foreseen, and it was painful to the friends, as well as to the foes, of the first Chancellor of the new German Empire.

There is an incident associated with this event which is not known generally, and which gives it a pathos akin almost to that of a Greek tragedy. When Bismarck saw that he was doomed, he turned towards his victim of bygone years, and

asked the Empress Frederick to plead for him with her son. The Empress was a woman, and she could not resist the temptation of retaliating for all she had been made to endure, and to the letter of her old enemy she simply replied 'that he had so well destroyed any influence she might have had over her son, that she could not, with any hope of success, interfere in the matter of his going or staying.'

But she was human, after all, and she must have felt revenged when she found she was once more in the position of granting or refusing something to the man who had opposed her so constantly, and treated her so mercilessly.

In 1891 my eldest son's health necessitated a sojourn in a milder climate than Russia, and we took a house for eight months in Jersey. Whilst there we often went to London, and it was in the course of that summer that we were asked for the first time to stay at Hatfield House. Needless to relate the impression produced on me by the old home of the Cecils. A more noble mansion than that old Jacobean building it would be difficult to find. But what constituted its greatest charm was the kindness of the hosts, and the intellectual enjoyment one carried away from those historic halls, over which two such exceptional people as the late Lord and Lady Salisbury presided. They belonged to that rare type, which disappears every day, of the real Grand Seigneurs, invariably courteous, invariably amiable, invariably kind, and invariably interesting. The very air

one breathed had something different than that of other places, and one felt from the first moment one entered those hospitable doors, that all the petty meannesses which tend so often to make human life a miserable thing were totally absent from that centre of cleverness over which the descendant of Elizabeth's great Minister and his accomplished wife presided with such quaint dignity and such high-bred good grace.

Two years later we were once more in England. My daughter had been presented, and I wished to give her the pleasure of a London season. We arrived in London in May, and remained until the beginning of July. The Liberals were then in power, and the famous Bill concerning the death duties was being discussed in the House. Public feeling was running very high, and, as the circle in which we moved was essentially a Conservative one, we used to hear violent abuse and denunciations of Mr. Gladstone and his politics. I met the great man himself at a dinner at the Russian Embassy, and I must say I was intensely disappointed in him. I had expected something quite different, and I thought with regret of Lord Beaconsfield and his great powers of fascination. And yet, as a whole, I found myself far more in sympathy with Mr. Gladstone's opinions. He had an ideal, which very few people possess nowadays, and one could see at once that he was in earnest, and that he had not looked lightly on anything he had done. But, though his speeches have always appealed to me, his person

has not. I did not take to him, to use a vulgar expression, and I think I like him far better now that I have read his biography by Mr. Morley, than when I used to meet him himself.

Talking of Mr. Morley reminds me that I used to meet him, too, in society, during that same London season. He was an absolutely delightful man, and his conversation was one of the most enjoyable things society could offer one. I shall never forget some talks I had with him.

During the months we spent in London, two events took place. One was the going down of the *Victoria*. The news of it arrived a few hours before a Court ball, which was instantly countermanded by the Queen, with her usual tact and foresight. In society, too, the shock was very great, and for days one talked and heard of nothing else.

The second event was the marriage of the Duke of York. Many Royalties came from the Continent to be present, amongst others our Grand Duke Cesarewitch, now the Emperor Nicholas II. His visit was looked upon with great interest, and every possible honour was shown to him. He was present at a State ball which took place a few days before the wedding, as well as at a party given at the Russian Embassy, where M. and Madame de Staal welcomed not only the English Royal family, but also the King and Queen of Denmark, who were in England for the marriage of their first grandson.

The marriage was celebrated at St. James's

Palace with great pomp. We had a house in Clarges Street, and from our windows obtained an excellent sight of the procession as it passed along Piccadilly. The Queen was in a State carriage, with the Duchess of Teck, kind and popular Princess Mary, sitting opposite to her. The latter looked beaming, and the Queen also had one of those winning smiles which lent such singular beauty to her features.

In going over these years, which seem so near and yet so far away, I have not mentioned the first interview I had with the Empress Frederick after her widowhood. It took place in Berlin, in the autumn of 1890. She was in the capital for a few days, and I was also passing through it on my way to Paris. Of course, I asked to see her, and she received me, in the evening, in the room in which we used to assemble prior to her making her appearance, at the parties she used to give as Crown Princess. It had been partly refurnished since I had seen it last, and the magnificent picture of the Emperor, in his white Cuirassier uniform, by Angeli, was hanging on the wall surrounded by a garland of green laurels. The Empress was standing under it when I was ushered into the room, and she made two steps towards me. I could not speak, but only go up to her and kiss her hand in silence. She also seemed on the point of breaking down, and something like a sob escaped her. But she soon recovered her usual composure, and after a few brief remarks, such

as 'You did not expect to find me like that,' she quickly changed the conversation, and became her own sweet self once more. Her hair had grown white, but her eyes had the same beautiful soft look they had possessed before, though surrounded by that red circle only to be seen where many tears have been shed. Her manner, too, had slightly changed, and the vivacity which had distinguished it before had vanished, never to return. Her whole appearance revealed an intensity of suffering, but suffering nobly borne, nobly endured, suffering out of which she had come better, kinder, than she had been before, if that had been possible. She spoke of all the things in which she had felt an interest, before the tragedy of her life had been accomplished. A few other people besides myself were there, among them Professor Helmholtz and his wife, the niece of old Madame von Mohl. The Empress had a word for every one, and talked with the same animation as of old. But for those who knew her, it was easy to see how much the effort cost her, and how thoroughly she had mastered that great secret of conquering oneself, which so very few have grasped.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Winter of 1893-1894—*Beginning of the Illness of Alexander III.—Our Journey to Italy—An Audience of Pope Leo XIII.—Cardinal Ledochowski—Another Summer in England—Death of Alexander III.*

THE winter of 1893-1894 was an eventful one in the sense that it was the last of Alexander III.'s life and reign. It opened brilliantly, and at Court, as well as in society, balls and festivities were announced to take place in a greater number than had been the case in former years. An English friend of mine, the Duchess of Buckingham and Chandos, came to pay us a long visit, and we tried to make her stay in St. Petersburg as pleasant as we could. The first great Court ball was announced, and invitations for it were already issued, when I was startled one evening by hearing from General Tcherewine that the Emperor had been taken suddenly and alarmingly ill. We had never heard that there was anything the matter with his health, and, as it turned out afterwards, no one, even among the members of his family, had suspected he was suffering from a mortal disease. When this first sharp attack, which was nothing else than the beginning of the end, seized hold of him, people called it influenza, and refused to recognise its gravity. The facts of the case were, that the Emperor had never been well since

the railway accident at Borki, but his was not a nature that complained, and he had kept to himself the feeling of ill-health which he had experienced. One does not care in Russia to speak of the ill-health of any members of the Imperial family, especially of the sovereign, and though it was not possible to keep the public in ignorance of the sudden collapse in his strength, which occurred at the time I am speaking of, the bulletins made light of his illness, which was attributed to a chill and nothing else. Of course, the Court ball was countermanded, but as soon as Alexander III. was up again, it took place, and no one dared to notice the haggard looks of the unfortunate Emperor. The only person who dared say that there was anything seriously amiss was General Tcherewine, and he confided to me in secret that he thought matters were far more serious than the public suspected.

In March of the same year we took my daughter to Italy, where I wished her to make acquaintance with the wonders of Florence and Rome. A few days before we started, the fifty years' jubilee of a charitable institution called the Community of the Holy Trinity, a nursing home for poor people, was celebrated in St. Petersburg. Being under the patronage of several members of the Imperial family, and having been founded by one of the daughters of Nicholas I., it had always enjoyed special privileges, and on the occasion to which I refer, the Emperor and Empress themselves were present at the jubilee

celebrations. I was interested in this hospital, and on very friendly terms with the lady who was at the head of it, Mlle. Abaza, the sister of the former Finance Minister, M. Abaza. I was invited to the divine service which was celebrated in the chapel of the establishment, after which we (by which I mean the few ladies present) assembled in the surgery, where the sovereigns came to speak to us. It was then that I was struck by the extreme change which had taken place in the countenance of the Emperor. The few times I had seen him during the winter season had been in the evening, when it was difficult to judge of his looks and the colour of his complexion. On this brilliant March morning, and in the bare whitewashed room in which we were gathered together, I was struck by his appearance and the ravages of his physiognomy. He appeared to have aged suddenly twenty years, and his skin was quite yellow, whilst an air of indescribable fatigue pervaded his whole person. I somehow felt convinced that his days were numbered, and that I was looking upon him for the last time. He came up to me and spoke a few words. On my telling him, in reply to one of his questions, that we were going abroad in a few days, he made the remark that he could not understand why people were always doing so. I replied that it was in order to escape the spring season in St. Petersburg, which was always so trying, and without reflecting on what I was saying, added, 'I think your Majesty would also benefit through a trip to a better

climate.' He smiled wearily, and replied, 'Ah! but I cannot do what I would like to do.'

On my return home, the Emperor's look of suffering haunted me, and I told my husband and daughter that I did not think he could live long. My forebodings turned out to be but too true, and I never saw Alexander III. after that day. When we returned to Russia, in November of that same year, he had been dead some days.

We spent a few very pleasant weeks in Italy. We met many old friends in Rome, and thoroughly enjoyed our stay there from the social point of view. The very day after our arrival, a former acquaintance of ours, the Baron Zorn de Bulach, who had recently entered holy orders, and who at present is Bishop of Strasburg, came to see us, and brought us tickets for St. Peter's, where the ceremony of the canonisation of a new saint was to take place, in the presence of the Pope himself. In those days these tickets were rather difficult to obtain, and we were very glad to have an opportunity of seeing Leo XIII. We started accordingly in good time, and though we arrived about an hour earlier than the ceremony was to take place, we found almost all the places in the different tribunes occupied, and could only with the greatest difficulty force our way through the immense and compact crowd which filled the vast cathedral. St. Peter's in its best clothes—for the Italian custom of draping the walls of the churches in red silk, can be called clothing them—did not impress me favourably.

It looked too gorgeous, far too showy, and the true spirit of Christianity was as far away from it as possible. This first impression was accentuated, when shouts proceeding from the aisle of the church announced the advent of the Pope.

First appeared a long procession of bishops, monks, archbishops and cardinals, all of them carrying lighted tapers in their hands. They came slowly, two by two, and were followed by a detachment of Swiss Guards in their quaint scarlet uniforms, and the whole procession seemed interminable, as it uncoiled itself from the depths of the immense cathedral. Seen in the dusk of a spring evening, by the flickering light of thousands of wax candles, it had a weird, an almost uncanny appearance. All these shapes of monks and priests, moving noiselessly about, reminded one of a scene in an opera, rather than a ceremony in a church. There was nothing real about it. The building as well as the men who filled it, struck one as a vast assemblage of ghosts, gathered together in a spot just as ghostly as they were themselves phantoms.

At last, borne high on the shoulders of the Noble Guard, with two enormous fans of ostrich feathers carried behind him, the Pope himself appeared, greeted by maddening shouts of '*Evviva il Papa Re!*' 'Long live the Pope King.' Impassive as a statue, Leo XIII. sat rigid on the *Sedia gestatoria*, with his two fingers lifted up in a sign of benediction. His pale emaciated face struck one as something too

diaphanous for this world. Even the eyes had a dull look, and an almost glassy expression. Not a muscle on his face moved, not a sign of emotion did he exhibit, amidst the passionate enthusiasm with which he was received by a crowd who, it was evident, was gathered together only for a political manifestation. As I watched that silent, haughty, hieratic figure, I suddenly understood what I had not been able to comprehend until then, the power wielded by the Church of Rome, simply through its immobility, and its stagnation into paths which the human mind has left long ago. The whole force exercised by superstition, when it is transformed into an instrument of faith, struck me as forcibly as unpleasantly, and I realised the disgust which must have seized some independent spirits in the centuries gone by, when they saw the Church of Christ transformed into a kingdom of ignorance and superstition. In spite of the Pope's gesture of blessing, there was nothing kind, still less divine, in his appearance. It reminded one of the car of Juggernaut, and seemed as merciless and inexorable as the chariot of the Indian god.

There was a moment of silence as the choristers intoned the '*Tu es Petrus*' of the celebrated anthem. Suddenly the white apparition, upon which all eyes were riveted, disappeared; one saw nothing but a mass of red and violet robes prostrated before something one could not perceive, and the glimmer of the innumerable tapers lighted up the gold and silver of hundreds of

mitres lowered to the ground. In this confusion the brain reeled, and the eyesight seemed suddenly to have grown dim. Then gradually, very gradually, one could just guess, rather than see, a white shadow kneeling before the grave of St. Peter.

A moment's breathless pause, and then the sublime voice of the choir rose up again, and another one was heard singing softly, '*Benedicat vos, Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus,*' and one realised that it was the voice of Leo XIII., invoking a blessing upon the crowd before which he had just knelt himself.

It all seemed a dream, and before one was awake all had disappeared, the white-robed pontiff, and the clergy in its splendid vestments, and the Swiss Guard with their drawn swords. There remained nothing but a panting crowd, struggling to come out of the church.

A few days later we were admitted into the presence of Leo XIII. This audience will always remain impressed upon my mind. It was fixed for an early hour, as we were invited to be present at the Pope's Mass, which was considered a great privilege. Punctually at seven o'clock we were climbing the many flights of stairs which lead to the pontiff's private apartments in the Vatican. We passed through immense halls, in each of which a sentinel was on duty, and we reached one smaller than the rest, where two monsignori were waiting for us. We found that there were about six people convoked for the ceremony, and we were introduced into another apartment, where

faldstools were standing opposite a close door. After a waiting which appeared very long, this door suddenly opened without warning. and a figure wrapped up in a scarlet cloak appeared before one had had time to realise what it was, or to recognise the Pope. The apparition seemed fantastic: fantastic also the large gesture of benediction with which he sprinkled with holy water the assistants. Then he disappeared again, and the doors closed upon him, to open once more, a few minutes later, disclosing to our eyes Leo XIII. at the altar, reciting, in that melodious, peculiar voice of his, the *Confiteor*.

The mass went on, said simply, but with a pathos which could not fail to impress itself upon the imagination of the listeners. Certainly the art of appearances had been closely studied by the late Pope. Every one of his words seemed addressed to a particular person, and, as the Latin sentences fell upon the ear, one could feel that they were spoken rather than pronounced. The *Pater noster* was recited with almost passionate accents, passionate, at least, for such an unemotional personage as Leo XIII.; its syllables contained a wail of anguish, and the 'Forgive us our trespasses' rang as a cry for indulgence for the sins of the whole world.

When mass was over, the Pope disappeared again, and his chaplain at once ascended the altar, and celebrated another one, after which a master of ceremonies came forward, and introduced us into the very same small chapel where it had taken

place, in a corner of which the pontiff was sitting in a large chair, with his scarlet cloak again thrown upon his shoulders.

We approached and knelt beside him, and he began talking very softly, asking us about the position of the Catholic Church in Russia.

Just prior to our departure, a painful incident had occurred in connection with the closing of a church in the government of Wilna, and the Catholic Bishop of St. Petersburg had asked my husband to mention the matter to the Holy Father. I at once saw that the subject was unwelcome to him; the Court of Rome was at that very time engaged in negotiations with the Russian Government about the establishment of a *modus vivendi*, which was concluded a few months later, and it was very evident that the Pope did not care to be told facts which might have obliged him to interfere when he did not desire to do so. All the diplomacy, which was one of his principal characteristics, appeared at that moment; he hastened to change the conversation, saying in French, in which language the whole of the conversation we had with him was conducted, 'What can I do? I am a poor old man, helpless and friendless; I can only pray,' and then, after a pause, he went on: 'Pray,' he said, 'pray always, continually, never leave off praying, and have faith. Faith is everything. Faith is the strength of the world.' '*La foi c'est tout, la foi c'est la force du monde.*' I repeat the words as they were told to us, and they sounded both as a warning

and as an appeal. My husband was deeply impressed; it was also my case, but in a different way, and I could not divest myself of the idea that there was a ring of unrealness in what we had heard. I do not think Pius IX. would have spoken thus.

Among the cardinals whose acquaintance we made in Rome, Cardinal Ledochowski, whose name has already been mentioned in these pages, was without doubt the most remarkable personality. One might or might not agree with his opinions, and the political ideas and system which he represented, but one had, whether one liked it or not, to admire his immense intelligence, and the unflinching courage with which he held his own among the innumerable intrigues of the Papal Court. Though a diplomat by nature, he would never have lowered himself to diplomatic tricks, nor sacrificed any of his principles for a temporary advantage. He was not liked among the Pope's entourage, and did not dissimulate his own antagonism to certain measures adopted by Leo XIII. With Cardinal Rampolla he was hardly on speaking terms.

This last-mentioned personage was the type of the crafty Italian, gifted with more astuteness than intelligence, but a past-master in the art of intrigue. His very politeness made one distrustful as to his intentions. He was known already at that time as an aspirant to the pontifical tiara, and many people thought that his chances of being elected successor to Leo XIII. were considerable.

Another Roman dignitary, this one in a state of quasi disgrace, was Cardinal Hohenlohe, the brother of the Chancellor of the Empire. He had his quarters at Santa Maria Maggiore, and was spending his time in denunciations of the Jesuits, whose hand he saw in everything which happened either to him or to the world. He had been considered one of the tools of Prince Bismarck, and it is probable he made himself useful to the great Minister, but I do not think he ever played the important part in political affairs which was at one time attributed to him.

We spent three delightful weeks in Rome, then, after a short stay in Naples and at Florence, we went to London by way of Paris.

We found England quite excited about the Home Rule Bill, and Mr. Gladstone was held in execration by the Conservative party. In spite of the effervescence which reigned, society contrived to amuse itself as much as ever. The heir to the Russian throne was on a visit to Queen Victoria at Windsor, together with his *fiancée*, the Princess Alix of Hesse. Their engagement had just been announced, and in view of the Emperor's state of health, about which every day more and more disquieting rumours were afloat, it had been hailed with the utmost delight by the nation, who hoped to see the succession to the throne assured in the direct line. That hope has still to be fulfilled.

It was a delightful summer we spent in part in London, and in part in Kent, where we had

taken a house. Some charming visits we made added to our enjoyment, and among those I remember with the greatest pleasure was a stay at Waddesdon Manor, where Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild used to dispense such charming hospitality. I also had the opportunity of taking my daughter to Hatfield House, and I was very glad that, during the few days we stayed there, she saw something of the home life which made that place so attractive, apart from all its other charms.

I was in Scotland when late in September I heard that the state of health of Alexander III. had become quite hopeless. The news got worse and worse as time went on, and during a short stay we made in Paris in October, I received letters from Livadia, where the dying monarch was going through his last struggle, which informed me that his life was only a question of a few days. We made immediate preparations to return to Russia, but before we could reach it, we heard in Berlin that all was over, and that the Emperor had breathed his last on November 1st, 1894.

It was an immense loss to the country over which he had ruled so wisely, and for such a short time. With him an important factor in European politics disappeared, and Russia lost a good deal of the prestige she had undoubtedly obtained whilst he was presiding over her destinies. Thoroughly conscientious, honest, good, in the full sense of the term, he had known how to

ally necessary firmness with kindness, and far more generosity and large-mindedness than the world had ever given him credit for. He left to his son a country peaceful in appearance as well as in reality, and the sorrow with which his early demise was received throughout the Empire, whose welfare had been his first care, was sincere and unaffected. With him a great force had disappeared, and with him a whole political system was buried. His successor was an unknown quantity, about whose tastes and opinions no one, even those who had approached him most intimately, knew anything. With Alexander III.'s death it was felt in Russia that the Empire was once more plunging into the unknown.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Emperor's Funeral—I see the Empress Frederick in Berlin —Her Appreciation of Events in Russia, and her Opinion of its future Empress's Character—Nicholas II.'s Marriage —Impression produced in St. Petersburg by his Consort —Address of the Zemstwo of Twer—Death of General Tcherewine.

THE Emperor Alexander III. breathed his last at Livadia in the Crimea, from whence his body was brought back to St. Petersburg. Princess Alix of Hesse, the future wife of the heir to the throne, had arrived there a few days previous to the monarch's death. She had travelled very quietly and unostentatiously, being met at the Central Railway station in Berlin by the Emperor William himself, who thought it policy to wish God-speed to the cousin about to receive an Imperial crown. The Empress Frederick, who at that time was also in the German capital, did not, so far as I can remember, see her niece, who proceeded in all haste to the Crimea. She was present at the last moments of the sovereign, whose son she was about to wed, and a few days after he had passed away, she was received into the Greek Church, under the name of Alexandra Feodorowna.

The much-loved and much-lamented Emperor's mortal remains were taken back to the capital with great pomp, and for something like a week

the mournful procession wended its way through the whole of the Russian Empire, met everywhere by a sympathetic crowd. The body lay in State in Moscow for twenty-four hours, and then reached St. Petersburg, where it remained exposed in the fortress for over a week previous to its interment.

We were in Berlin as I have already said, at the time of the Emperor's death. About two or three days after it had taken place, I saw the Empress Frederick, and, of course, the event was discussed between us. At that time people had a very high opinion of Princess Alix of Hesse, and the most flattering reports were afloat concerning her. When I mentioned them to the Empress, and said how much one rejoiced in Russia at the idea of being ruled by an Empress imbued with all the liberal opinions inseparable from an English education, I was very much surprised to find that she did not agree at all with me. She did not say much, of course, but simply remarked that it was not quite safe to trust to what was said by people ignorant of the true character of those they praised or blamed, according to the exigencies of the moment. She added that Princess Alix had a very haughty disposition, and would be much more inclined than one supposed to take *au sérieux* her position of absolute sovereign. She also made an allusion to the despotic temperament and the self-opinionated tendencies of her niece: 'She is far too much convinced of her own perfection,' said the Empress, 'and she will

never listen to other people's advice; besides, she has no tact, and perhaps, without knowing it, will manage to wound the feelings of the persons she ought to try and conciliate.' And when I remarked how strange it was that a daughter of the Princess Alice, and a grand-daughter of the Queen, could have such a disposition, the Empress sadly smiled, and simply remarked: 'Oh! but when do you see daughters taking after their mothers?' then after a short pause she added, 'It would not be possible for any one to be like my sister.'

We returned to St. Petersburg a few days before the funeral of Alexander III. In spite of the abominable weather, I went to one of the services which were celebrated twice a day at the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul in the fortress, where the Emperor's body lay in State. It had been embalmed, of course, but nevertheless the features were so much altered it would have been impossible to recognise them, had one not known who it was. The Dowager Empress, smothered in crape, appeared regularly at these services, and it was a painful sight to see her, bowed down with grief, beside the bier of the husband she had loved so fondly.

As soon as Alexander III. was buried, the question of his successor's marriage cropped up. At first no one knew whether it would be post poned for a year, in order to be celebrated with all the pomp attendant on the nuptials of a sovereign, or whether it would take place quite privately at once. After much deliberation and

discussion, the advice of the Prince of Wales prevailed, and it was finally settled that the wedding was to take place immediately, but not to be followed by festivities of any kind.

The 14th of November was the day chosen for the ceremony. It was the birthday of the Empress Marie Feodorowna, and it was thought that it would prove a lucky one for all the parties concerned. Needless to say that intense interest and curiosity were attached to the event. It was the first time in the annals of Russian history since Peter the Great that a sovereign was about to be wedded, and, naturally, the event was eagerly looked forward to. We assembled at the Winter Palace at about ten o'clock in the morning of that 14th of November, and I took this opportunity to bring with me my second daughter, who had not yet been introduced into society, but whom I wished to see something of the Russian Court, at which she was not destined to live, as her marriage with Prince Blucher von Wahlstadt was already a settled thing. I was sorry she would not have the chance to go through a St. Petersburg season, or to become personally acquainted with our sovereigns. It could not be helped, however, and the only glimpse she got of Court life at home was the Emperor's marriage.

As I have said, we got early to the palace, and though we had to wait there a long time it was most interesting owing to the quantity of different people whom the occasion had drawn together. There were representatives from every

part of Russia, as well as from all the different Courts of Europe. Great things being expected from the young lady about to become Empress her appearance was eagerly watched for. She had arrived, preceded by a great reputation for cleverness, and had she understood the Russian people better she could have become very popular. It was about half-past eleven when at last the doors of the private apartments of the Emperor were thrown open and the *cortège* appeared. Preceded by the usual train of Chamberlains and other Court officials, the young Emperor appeared leading his bride by the hand. She looked absolutely lovely: her tall, elegant figure would have attracted attention in any circumstances; but on that day it appeared to greater advantage than I have ever seen it. She wore upon her head the diamond crown in which all the Russian Grand Duchesses are wedded, and a long mantle of cloth of gold lined with ermine on her shoulders; her train was carried by six high dignitaries of the Imperial household. Her cheeks were slightly tinted with red, the result of her evident emotion, and her whole appearance was splendid. A smothered cry of enthusiasm greeted her, and one heard everywhere the exclamation, 'How lovely she is!'

Behind her and the Emperor walked the Dowager Empress, leaning on the arm of her father, the King of Denmark. Marie Feodorowna was dressed in white from head to foot, with a magnificent pearl necklace round her throat, but

no other jewels. Her white drawn face and pinched lips revealed the struggle she was undergoing, but she walked with a firm step, though making, it was but too evident, a violent effort to restrain her tears. She did not once break down during the long ceremony, and went through that trying day with a firm courage, which I am sadly afraid was not sufficiently admired or appreciated at the time.

The wedding ceremony over, the newly-married sovereigns proceeded to the Kazan Cathedral, and afterwards to the Anitchkoff Palace, where, welcomed by the Dowager Empress, they took up their abode with her until their own apartments in the Winter Palace were ready to receive them.

An episode that was very much commented upon in connection with the Emperor's marriage was, that when he passed in front of the Roman Catholic Church on the Newski Prospect, on his way home with his bride, the Catholic Archbishop, in full ecclesiastical vestments, awaited him on the threshold with the cross and holy water. He delivered an address, to which Nicholas II. made a suitable reply, and this manifestation of the head of the Roman communion in Russia was interpreted in the sense of a possible reconciliation of the Polish party with the new sovereign.

It was during that first winter which followed the accession of the Emperor Nicholas II., that the famous incident of the address presented by the Zemstwo, or local assembly of Twer, took place. This assembly had always been credited with liberal ideas, and in its words of greeting to the new sove-

reign, it expressed the hope that the government of Russia would at last be conducted more according to Occidental ideas. The address had nothing disrespectful in it; it proceeded from people whose loyalty and devotion to the throne were unimpeachable, and who were far above any intention to offend. Yet it was received by the young Czar with an anger that nothing has ever explained, and which found its way in a most singular manner. When, a few days later, deputations of the different provinces were solemnly received by him and the Empress, in order to offer some wedding presents to Alexandra Feodorowna, the Emperor suddenly made a speech, in which he absolutely threatened with unheard-of penalties his subjects, in case they allowed themselves to indulge in any hopes of a liberal government. He even went so far as to shake his fist at his unfortunate auditors, who were at a loss to understand what they had done to deserve this explosion of wrath, which was, to say the least of it, singular, coming as it did from a man to whom they had just presented costly gifts. A few days later, a letter from the Nihilist Executive Committee was received by him, in which an eloquent answer was given to his hasty and imprudent words.

In November of that same year 1894, the Empress gave birth to her first child, a girl, and the disappointment produced by the sex of the infant added to her unpopularity. A few balls took place at the Winter Palace, but the gaiety and animation which had made the Russian Court

famous in the days of Alexander III. had disappeared. The graceful, gentle form of Marie Feodorowna no longer presided over these festivities, and with her had disappeared their principal charm. Invitations even were no longer sought after, and a certain portion of society began to exhibit a studied indifference for the Imperial pair, which in such a short time had contrived to make itself so unpopular. A strong party supported the Dowager Empress, and as her political influence was certainly stronger than that of her daughter-in-law, she soon became a power far greater than she had ever been in the lifetime of her husband.

It was in February of 1896 that General Tcherewine died. With him disappeared one of the foremost statesmen in Russia, and certainly the man who had been the most powerful one in that country for thirteen years. His position as Head of the Secret Police of the Empire, and as personal friend of Alexander III., had made him a formidable individual. And yet I doubt if he had a single enemy. Just, conscientious, kind, noble in mind as well as in character, he left a stainless reputation, and was regretted by all who had approached him, To the Emperor, and especially to the Empress Marie Feodorowna, his loss was irreparable. He had been the trusted adviser of the Imperial family, not only on political matters, but also in their private life, and his admirable tact had contrived to keep from the public more than one incident which would not

have resounded to the credit of the reigning dynasty. He was a true gentleman, a perfect friend, one whom it was an honour to know and a privilege to see. For me his death, which put an end to an intimacy of many years, was a blow from which I have not recovered to this day. Apart from the sense of personal loss, I found myself deprived of the greatest interest I had had in my life, that of being behind the scenes of the political history of my country. All my interest in existence disappeared with that faithful and devoted friend, to whom I owed so much.

A few weeks after his death, desirous of escaping for some time from the gossip of St. Petersburg, I went to the Italian Lakes to spend a few days there, previous to encountering the fatigues of the forthcoming coronation, at which my daughters desired to be present.

On my way to Pallanza, I saw at Frankfurt the Empress Frederick, and noticed for the first time on this occasion a change in her personal appearance. It was not so much that she had grown older, but there was a settled look of pain on her face, such as is only seen in cases of acute physical suffering. But she did not complain, and to my questions about her health, she replied that she felt much as usual, and as well as she could ever expect to be. The tone in which these words were said, did not strike me at the time as being ominous, but I have often thought of them since. They seemed to herald a danger of which I did

not, of course, suspect the magnitude, but which I felt vaguely to be existing. Little did I guess that the Empress was already doomed, and that the days which were left to her to spend upon earth were destined to be made hideous by suffering such as, fortunately, very few have to endure.

CHAPTER XX.

Another Coronation—The Consolidation of the French Alliance —Nicholas II.'s Journey to Paris—Prince Bismarck's Death—I spend a Winter on the Riviera—My last Interview with the Empress Frederick—The Beginning of the End.

It was with very different feelings from those I had in 1883 that I started for Moscow, to attend the coronation of Nicholas II. To tell the truth, I do not think any one felt particularly elated about it. Trade was drooping, agriculture had just gone through years of hard losses, and what with the scarcity of money, and with discontent at the prevailing order of things, the approaching festivities were viewed with more apprehension than anything else, and certainly without the slightest enthusiasm. When we reached Moscow, we found people were more occupied with the scanty and uncomfortable accommodation the town offered, than with the doings of the sovereigns about to receive the crown of their ancestors. There were no private entertainments, such as made the coronation of the late Emperor so brilliant; and public energy seemed to concentrate itself upon the two Court balls which were announced, as well as upon that of the French Embassy, which was widely commented upon, on account of Madame de Montebello's popularity in society.

I went with my daughters to view the entry of the Emperor and Empress into Moscow from the house of some friends of ours, opposite the residence of the Governor-General, from whence we had watched that of Alexander III. and his consort thirteen years before. It took place with just the same amount of pomp and splendour, but lacked the enthusiasm which had been so remarkable on the former occasion.

The Emperor, when he appeared mounted on his white charger, was hardly cheered, except by the troops who lined the road. As for the Empress she was received with a dead silence, which she must have felt, in spite of the indifference with which she was credited. The only person who was received with enthusiasm was the Dowager Empress. When the gold carriage in which she was seated appeared, a burst of acclamation escaped the crowd, hitherto silent and undemonstrative, and the shouts with which she was welcomed were almost deafening. She looked very pale, but perfectly self-possessed, and though the occasion could not have been anything else but painful to her, she bowed with her usual good grace to the crowd, and appeared so youthful that one could easily have believed that she was about to be crowned, instead of the stern-looking woman whose carriage followed her own, and who stared at the sea of faces with which she was surrounded with an expression which had something of disdain, and something of distrust in it.

The same evening or the next, I do not remember

exactly, Prince Lobanoff, Minister for Foreign Affairs, gave an evening party, at which I met after some years a friend of mine, Count Mourawieff, then Russian Minister at Copenhagen, who, in the days of Prince Orloff and Count Schouwaloff, had been councillor of the Russian Embassy in Berlin, and to whom I was linked by feelings of friendship which lasted until his death.

Count Mourawieff, who was a few months later to be in his turn appointed to the responsible post of Minister for Foreign Affairs, was certainly one of the cleverest diplomats the Russian service has ever known. His personality has been very much discussed, as is generally the case with every clever man: he has been accused in turn of ambition and unscrupulousness, has been hated as well as feared by his superiors and his subordinates, but few people have managed better than he to get along in the world, and to avoid every kind of danger and pitfall. At the time I am speaking of, he was in the bad books of Prince Lobanoff, and, as he admitted to me, profoundly discouraged at the obstacles that were being put into his way. We had been the closest of friends for many years, and I shall always remember with gratitude that at a time of crisis in my life, I owe it to Count Mourawieff that I was able to escape from a very serious danger, and to come out victoriously from a very perilous position. We had, at the time I met him in Moscow, not seen each other for something like two years, and I am glad to say that I found it in my power to give to

Count Mourawieff a certain amount of courage and nerve which ultimately made him get over the despondency under which he was suffering, I always prophesied to him that he would one day rise to a high position in the State, but he did not seem to believe me, and complained that his immediate chiefs placed so many obstacles in his way, that he was afraid he would have to retire altogether from the service. I advised him, before doing so, to try and get an audience with the Dowager Empress, of whom he had always been a favourite, and to explain to her his situation, asking her at the same time for her protection. At first Count Mourawieff did not take well to my advice, but finally he followed it, and the day before his departure from Moscow, which took place before the end of the coronation festivities, he came to see me, and told me that he had acted on my suggestion, and seen the Empress. Later on, in the course of the next few months, he had the opportunity, during the annual visit of Marie Feodorowna at Copenhagen, to have some serious conversations with her, with the result that after the death of Prince Lobanoff, he was, upon her recommendation, appointed in his place.

The coronation followed the precedent set by that of the Emperor Alexander II. There was only one difference, and that is, that whereas the late Emperor had never appeared to greater advantage than when he came out of the Cathedral with the crown upon his head, and the folds of the Imperial mantle falling from his shoulders, his son was

dragged down by these emblems of his power, and seemed to be unable to bear the weight of the Imperial ensigns, and to totter under them. When he reached the Church of the Ascension he fainted away, and certainly did not impress the crowd either with his presence or his personality.

The Empress looked more cold and disdainful than ever; the crown did not suit her, and the way in which her hair was dressed added to the hardness of her features and the disagreeable expression of her mouth. She was, as upon the day of her entry in the ancient capital of the Empire, greeted with almost absolute silence.

Marie Feodorowna, when she made her appearance on the top of the red staircase, where I had seen her standing on the day of her own coronation, looked younger and more graceful than she had even done on that memorable occasion. She was exquisitely dressed in white, with her Imperial mantle very well adjusted this time on the bodice of her dress, just showing the outline of her lovely shoulders. Her hair, piled high up on the top of her head, was surmounted with the small diamond crown that had ornamented it once before, which suited admirably her delicate features. It was impossible not to be struck with the exquisite grace with which she bowed to the crowd, who cheered her most enthusiastically, and it contrasted singularly with the salutation of her daughter-in-law, when she, too, turned and bowed to the people assembled in the vast courtyard of the Kremlin.

Except for her apparition on the day of the coronation, the Dowager Empress did not take part in any of the festivities, and the only time she was heard of, was when, after the terrible catastrophe which marred the day of the popular festival, she at once hastened to the different hospitals to relieve, by her charity and gentleness, the sufferings of the victims of this awful calamity.

It is needless here to give the details of the misfortune which threw a veil of sadness over the coronation, and reminded people of the horrors that had attended the nuptials of Louis XVI. and his consort, the ill-fated Queen Marie Antoinette. How the catastrophe happened, and who was responsible for it, remains to this day a mystery. The fact was that, either through carelessness, or through neglect, about five thousand persons were crushed to death before even the festivity began.

The same day, a much-talked-of ball took place at the French Embassy, and the Imperial family attended it in full, without giving the slightest attention to the catastrophe which had taken place a few hours before. An Englishman who was present at that entertainment—over which a deep gloom presided, in spite of its splendour—remarked to me that the first care of Queen Victoria, after the going down of the *Victoria*, had been to countermand the Court ball which was announced for that very night—and, he added, 'the event did not take place in England.'

The callousness shown by Nicholas II. and

Alexandra Feodorowna in this sad circumstance, added more than was needed to their unpopularity. As I have related already, the conduct of the Dowager Empress, and the tender care she took of the survivors of the disaster, produced upon the nation an impression which, I believe, will never be effaced. Those who had loved her before, began to worship her, and though she had long ago made for herself a special place in the hearts of the Russian people, she has been looked upon since that sad day as their guardian angel, whose presence alone was sufficient to preserve them from any calamity.

The conduct of the French Ambassador was also viewed in an unfavourable light. The public were of opinion that he himself ought to have asked for permission to postpone his ball. In a certain sense the rebuke was deserved; but it must also be understood, on the other hand, that he could hardly take upon himself the responsibility of giving a lesson to the Emperor of All the Russias.

At that time the French Alliance was at its 'apogée.' Prepared during the last months of Alexander III.'s life, it was brought to a satisfactory conclusion by his successor, whose memorable visit to Paris is still fresh in people's minds. I cannot say that it was viewed with feelings of unmixed satisfaction in Russian society. Though anti-German feeling was running very high, and had done so for the last few years, yet the aristocratic sentiments of the upper classes in St. Peters-

burg received a terrible shock when they had to submit to the 'Marseillaise' being played in the presence of their sovereign, and to see him become the guest of a little bourgeois like Felix Faure. Though enthusiasm was excited, it was not universal, and even those who professed themselves most enchanted with the manifestations of approval which took place in both countries, looked with a certain degree of apprehension upon this intimacy of the modern French Republic with the old Russian monarchy of bygone times.

In the course of the summer of 1898 Prince Bismarck died at Friedrichsruhe, full of life and honours, but discontented with his lot, and not having been able to give up the *rôle* of sulky adversary of the Emperor William II. which he had adopted since that young and impetuous monarch had dismissed him. He was, with the Empress Frederick, the last survivor of an epoch which has already passed into the domain of history, and which I feel proud of having known. No one is now left of all the men who helped to build up that German Empire which holds the first place among the nations of Europe. They are all gone, they have all of them disappeared, and with Prince Bismarck died the last of the veterans, who, in a few short years, achieved so much with so little. Had he been removed from the scene of European politics ten years earlier, it would have been a world-shaking event. As it was, he had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing that he was not indispensable, and that his dismissal

did not affect the welfare of the Empire he had created.

This feeling was gall and wormwood to him, and it is a great pity he could not reconcile himself to the inevitable, and content himself with a silence which by its dignity would have made him a far more redoubtable foe to his ungrateful pupil, than he succeeded in being by filling the newspapers with his lamentations and recriminations. All the defects of this character, as small-minded in some things as it was great in others, were accentuated by the peculiar circumstances that attended his rupture with the sovereign who had, in spite of his wonderful genius, succeeded in making him his dupe. Though he had never believed in the gratitude of the world, yet he was wounded to the quick by the defection of all those whom he had befriended, and on whose fidelity he had the right to reckon. Disgust, bitter and intense, filled his impetuous soul; for long years he had never found an obstacle in his path, and he had grown accustomed to be considered as the foremost personage in Europe, on the smallest word of whom it was dependent. All at once he found himself relegated to the position of a private individual whose opinions and actions are of no importance whatever, and it was a humiliation he was not great enough to bear with equanimity, and to meet with the dignity of silence.

Great honours were paid to his memory, all Germany mourned him, and yet his funeral was more like the translation of the ashes of an illus-

trious dead from one place to another, than like the burial of a man who had recently been alive and filling his place under the sun. It was the founder of the German Empire that was carried to his grave on that fine summer day under the shadow of his old oaks; it was not the man who, a few days before, had been walking in those very alleys through which his coffin was now escorted to its last home.

In September, 1898, I went as usual to spend a few weeks on the Riviera; whilst there I became very ill, and have never regained my former health after the shock which it received at the time. I could not come back to Russia, and settled at Beaulieu, near Nice, where I spent some months, in a condition which at times kept me for days confined to my couch. As the spring came on, however, I got gradually better, and at last felt well enough to be able to go about a little, though still compelled to observe great precautions.

In April, the Empress Frederick, whose health was openly admitted to be failing, came to Bordighera, at about the same time that Queen Victoria arrived at Cimiez. I went to see her at the Hôtel Angst, where she occupied a suite of rooms, and was shocked beyond expression at the change I noticed in her appearance. Her eyes were quite sunken, and her complexion had assumed a grey hue; she seemed also weaker, and her manner had contracted a kind of weariness which I had never observed before, not even after her husband's death. She refused,

however, to admit that she was ill, though she owned she felt shaken owing to a fall from her horse she had sustained a few months before. But she expressed the hope that the lovely climate of the coast of the Mediterranean would soon restore her to her previous activity. Of course, I did not like to say anything, but I felt very anxious, and was convinced that her ailments were more than she liked to own. I did not suspect that she was already attacked by the terrible disease which was to carry her off, after such awful sufferings, and still less did I guess that she was aware of it, and resigned to the atrocious fate that was staring her in the face.

The Empress died with her 'boy's'—as she used to call him when he was a lad—hand clasped in hers. She blessed him and she forgave him, as mothers only can forgive, and so she passed away from the world she had adorned, from the friends she had loved, from the family to whom she had been devoted, from the poor she had helped, from all those who had been the richer for her kindness.

Her memory will live for ever in the hearts of those who have approached her, and to whom she has left a great example, and given a great lesson, by the firm courage with which she faced the sorrows and trials of her life, and the tortures of her long illness and death. She died, as I wrote after the terrible news that she was no more had reached me, a Queen, brave to the end. Often have I thought of her, and remembered the different occasions upon which I had seen her, in

public as well as in private life. I try sometimes to picture her to myself in the splendour of her Court array, or in the simple gowns she wore at home, when she was surrounded by her children and family; but, somehow, I seem always to see her as she appeared to me for the last time, standing in the middle of that hotel room at Bordighera, with violets in a big bowl on a table beside her, a slight small figure in deep mourning, with that far-away look upon her face, which only appears when one stands on the opening of that period of life, which is the beginning of the end.

CHAPTER XXI.

Cecil Rhodes—An Appreciation—Cecil Rhodes' Character—A Man of Moods—His Colossal Ambition—His Satellites—Personal Relations—His Last Hours—His Inner Thoughts—His Conduct during the War.

When I began this book I wished to end it with the death of the Empress Frederick, and leave for a later time the account of the events which led to my departure for South Africa, and the acquaintance with Cecil Rhodes, which was to prove so fatal to me. I am asked, however, to write here an appreciation of his character and personality, and though I feel I am the last person who ought to do it, yet I cannot refuse to comply with this request, because, in spite of all the harm that he has done me, it is impossible for me to mention his name with anything but admiration for the great talents as well as the magnificent qualities which made him such an exceptional creature, and I would like to give him, or rather his memory, a last proof of affection by showing him as he really was, with all his faults and all his good points, a man of extraordinary talents who, under different circumstances, might have risen to those heights where, according to the Russian poet's words, 'one gets so near to God, that one begins to understand Him.'

When, after all that I have endured and suffered, I think of him, and remember all he

did, the generous instincts that really existed in him, I seem to forget these sufferings, and my resentment melts away, leaving only room for passionate regret. He deserved a better fate than he got, and he ought not to have had such an unutterably sad and lonely deathbed, one from whence the two great things which sanctify those of humbler people—the Church's blessing, and a woman's love—were alike absent. He deserved, above all, to have had better friends. His career had begun by being too lucky; success smiled upon him too soon, and too persistently, until at last he grew to believe not so much in himself as in his power to do always what he wanted, no matter what that might be. His marvellous gifts did not prevent him from feeling the demoralising effects of the South African climate, and of South African life, which had their usual influence over him, as well as they have had over other people. The true appreciation of right and wrong vanished in him; he was never trained in that rude school of adversity and disappointment, which alone brings out all that is best in human nature. Had his political career begun in England, where a man has, whether he likes it or not, to bear a certain number of rebuffs, and to learn to submit to contradiction, he would have had a far greater chance to remain until the end of his life, the powerful man he had been at one time. In South Africa, surrounded as he was by the set of unscrupulous people who, since the Raid, were the only ones who cared to approach

him, it is no wonder that he lost all moral control and could only think of thrusting aside those who attempted to resist his will, or even not to agree with all he said, thought, or did.

During the long dreary months, when I had nothing else to do but to brood over the past, I have often tried to form a just appreciation of the character of Mr. Rhodes. I do not know whether I have succeeded, so I will not pretend to say that it is a true one, but it seems to me, from all I know, that he has been far too much hated, and too much loved at the same time. It is certain that all he did was calculated to produce one of these two effects, and those who only knew him superficially, can be excused if they judged him according to the mood in which they found him, for few men have been possessed to the same degree of the power he had to make himself lovable or hateful according to what he wished.

He was above everything a man of strong passions, unrelenting in his vengeances, and susceptible to a point which was almost childish to the opinion of others. Though he affected profound indifference towards the judgments of the press, yet he took a kind of morbid delight in reading all that was said about him, and in studying every word that was written of his doings and undertakings, and no one knew better than he did, the use to which journalism can be put. There was in him a latent vanity, which sometimes amused me very much. With all its greatness, that superior mind had small weaknesses which he

would have been the first to laugh at had he noticed them in other people, but which often induced those who, without knowing him well, were brought into contact with him, to carry away with them a false opinion about his personality. His one great defect was want of sympathy, and the extreme callousness he sometimes displayed, which more often than not was only pure affectation. He liked to appear different to any one else, as well as superior to the weaknesses of ordinary humanity; he also liked to give a false opinion of himself. I remember an anecdote which will explain what I mean by saying this.

One day some tourists of importance were visiting Groote Schuur, where they had been entertained by Mr. Rhodes; he took them himself over the house and grounds, and at last showed them one of Lobengula's sons, whom he employed as a workman on his estate. This led to a talk about the Matabele rebellion, and the visitor asked Mr. Rhodes in what year it had taken place. The Colossus thought for a moment, then calling to him the young native: 'Look here,' he said, 'what year did I kill your father?' This story, which I believe to be perfectly true, is characteristic of that unpleasant side of Mr. Rhodes' character, which has caused him to be so intensely hated. It was nothing but affectation in this instance, as well as in a mass of others, which had induced him to shock the feelings of his listeners. He was never sincere when he said such outrageous things; unfortunately they were believed in, and this disregard of

public opinion is one of the things which did him the most harm.

Mr. Rhodes was essentially a man of moods and impulses, and everything depended on the state of his nerves and temper. These had to be carefully studied whenever one had to deal with him. Sometimes he was all attention and eagerness to listen to you, when you had something to tell him; at other moments he met your request for a few minutes' conversation with a rudeness which absolutely discouraged one from beginning even to enter into the subject which one had prepared oneself to discuss. At such times it was that he used to take advantage of one, and very often his rudeness was but a way of cowing down his interlocutors, just as his fits of passion were assumed in order to get his own ends, or avoid unpleasant discussions. Here again was affectation, but of a useful kind, and here again he displayed the remarkable shrewdness to which he was indebted for most of his successes.

These were great and even extraordinary. In Europe he would not and could not have had them. There is no place in our old world for the display of the talent which will make Cecil Rhodes' name immortal in South Africa.

In the vast solitudes over which shines the Southern Cross, no one questions the way in which a man scores his successes; all that is required of him is to succeed. Cecil Rhodes knew this better than any one else; he understood the power of money, as well as the hold it gives one

over the world. He understood also that once the power was there, no one would inquire into the means by which it had been attained. He liked above everything to rule; his love of power was immense: had it been less he would not have done what he did, he would not have cherished the ambition to use his country's greatness as a footstool for his personal aims, and the glorification of his personal vanities.

Would a real patriot have entangled his country in the Jameson Raid, or have assumed responsibility for the ruthless crushing of the Matabele Rebellion? Mr. Rhodes did not perform this deed himself, but he allowed others to do so. One of his principles was to permit his subordinates to execute unpleasant tasks which he deemed to be necessary to his schemes, whilst reserving to himself the right to disavow them if they failed, and to assume the merit when successful. In one instance only did he boldly accept the consequences of his own mistake, and that was the famous Raid, and there circumstances more powerful than his will obliged him to do so. But as a general rule his patriotism was essentially a selfish one. By nature a real Italian Condottieri, such as the fifteenth century has produced, he wished above everything to reign, to domineer over his contemporaries; at the same time his marvellous, wonderful intelligence, grasped at once the fact that the days when kingdoms could be created out of nothing were gone for ever, and that private individuals could no longer hope to win crowns, which like Bonaparte's, would

suddenly make out of them the equals of all the old rulers of the world. And yet he wanted a kingdom, and he resolved to get it, whilst pretending to offer it to his country. Rhodesia was not conquered for the benefit of England, the Kimberley mines were not amalgamated for the welfare of their shareholders, De Beers Company was not organized in the powerful way it has been for the good of those whose earnings and savings were invested in it; all these things were done simply in order to make out of Cecil John Rhodes the most powerful man in South Africa, and one of the most powerful men in the world. That he became so there is no doubt, and strange as it may seem for me to say it, I think that he deserved it. In spite of his utter indifference to everything which was not connected with himself, the man was yet great, and had in him the germs of much that was good, and, moreover, was possessed of qualities which were as considerable as his faults. There was nothing mean or sordid about him; his wealth he used for the furtherance of his schemes, but never for his personal enjoyment; he was sometimes generous to a fault, he came to the help alike of friend or of foe, and often he saved people from ruin who were or had been his bitter enemies. He put all his energies into the development of the country which at last he came to consider as his personal property; he was always eager to further any plan which was to the advantage of the public good; he worked night and day for the prosperity of the vast interests which were

confided to his care. Supremely selfish in one sense, he was absolutely unselfish in another, and his kindness was most remarkable. In that rude nature there was a latent tenderness of which but few were aware, and which equalled that of a woman. He could talk softly to a child, he would listen to any tale of distress that was poured into his ears, he liked to do good, to use his riches to make other people happy. Many are the tears which he helped to dry, numerous are those whom he saved from despair, whose misery he relieved. He had redeeming qualities as well as his faults, and above everything he was possessed in a most extraordinary degree of the gift of fascinating all those with whom he came in contact, most of whom grew to love him, in spite of all he sometimes did later on to hurt or to shock them, and even the friends he lost or ruthlessly trampled upon in the course of his political career have always kept for him at the bottom of their hearts a lurking affection which resisted all he did afterwards to destroy it.

The bane of Mr. Rhodes' life has been that he never knew who were his real friends, and that instead of listening to those who loved him well enough to tell him the truth, even at the risk of wounding him, he allowed himself to be influenced by a set of individuals who, in order to reap certain advantages from their apparent intimacy with him, were prepared to stand any amount of rudeness, incivility, or even tyranny on his part. Mr. Rhodes despised them, but, unfortunately, he could not do without them in the last years of his

life. His was the kind of nature which did not brook contradiction, absolutely required flattery and adulation, and could not exist without a crowd of sycophants and courtiers to submit to all his caprices, and receive with gratitude all the kicks which he found a vicious kind of pleasure in administering to them. Though he never would own to the fact, he felt deeply the isolation in which he found himself left after the Jameson Raid, and the social ostracism which was the consequence of this act of folly. When he saw all the friends of his youth, those to whom he owed in part the success of his political career, withdraw themselves from him, he suffered as much as a strong nature like his could only suffer, but he never would admit it. He refused to acknowledge that he had been wrong, or to utter the words which would have brought these friends back to him, and for which some of them waited until death overtook him, and destroyed their hopes. Had he had less vanity and more pride, that pride characterised by a French author as '*pas de l'orgueil mais de la fierté*,' he would have found in him the moral courage to go and ask them for their forgiveness. They would have met him half-way, so deeply did they deplore the error into which he had been led. But the words were never spoken, the step was never taken, in spite of the efforts of all those who wished him well, and who in their affection for him would have given much, and sacrificed still more, to wipe out the stain with which he had sullied his

name; and the Colossus went to his grave with the sorrow he never would acknowledge, of having lost all that a man holds dear, and having been too weak to try and win it back again, by a small surrender of what after all was nothing but vanity.

But Cecil Rhodes' great weakness lay precisely in his inability to own himself to have been in the wrong, as well as his morbid desire to be admired in everything he did, thought, or said. At times the true instincts which he tried so hard to stifle made themselves heard, and then it was, that he would give way to those fits of anger or depression, during which he so brutally expressed his profound contempt for the motley crew which surrounded him; but even in those moments he made the mistake of putting on the same level those who yielded to him, and those who refused to enter into his plans or approve of all his deeds, and in that contempt he seemed to look for, and find, the justification of many an unjustifiable action. He did not admit that any one could resist him, and, unfortunately, he was led to believe that those who did so, had an ulterior object in view, that they were his enemies or the tools of his enemies. The quarrel I had with him proceeded from no other source; he believed I had betrayed him; he thought, or rather he was led to think, that I had wished to use the knowledge I had of certain facts to harm him, and he refused to understand that, had I been able to betray for him those whose life and safety I held in my hands, I could just as well have been capable of betraying him. Had Mr.

Rhodes had constantly at his side a good, honest, affectionate influence, there is no knowing what he might have done, or to what heights he might have risen. A strange fatality put him into the power of a few men, who destroyed much that was good, generous, and honest in his nature, and in the hands of whom he became all too pliable towards the end of his life.

As for his conduct towards myself, I will say, at the risk of being considered affected, that he was not so much to blame as may appear at first. Whatever some people may think, he had trusted me, and he had been led to think I had wronged and betrayed him. Had I done so, I would indeed have been a vile creature, and though this would not have justified what he did, nor the accusation he brought against me, yet the violence of the man's character excuses him in part. He had never spared any one in his life, he had always ruthlessly sacrificed all those whom he found an obstacle to his plans and ambitions. He knew I held his political reputation in my hands, and he did not understand that, though I would not, and could not, consent to become his tool—and ruin those who had trusted me—yet I would have died rather than endanger him in any way, that my affection for him was too deep to make me do anything else but defend him, as well as all he did, always, and in every circumstance, even when I knew that his actions were absolutely indefensible.

For a long time he had resisted the efforts of

all those who had tried to bring about a rupture between us, but circumstances proved too strong for him. Perhaps, also, I was to blame. I had judged him as an ordinary man, and had not understood that instead of appreciating a certain line of conduct he would interpret it as a want of friendship for himself. Then I only saw him occasionally; the others were always there, ready to make use of every opportunity to bring about a quarrel between us. At last he was goaded to the last pitch of exasperation, and did what he had threatened me he would do—that is, ruin me. But he suffered whilst doing so, and had I, the last time we met, stooped to implore his pity, I believe he would have tried to undo what he had done.

But I never saw him again, except from a distance, sitting at the window of the little cottage in which he died, panting for breath, struggling with approaching death, and all my heart went out to him in his misery and his loneliness; for indeed it was a piteous sight—the master of so many millions, the genius, for he was a genius, who had controlled so many great events, who had held the destinies of empires and nations in his hands, ending his days in solitude, with only a few servants around him.

I went home, and wrote to the medical man who attended him, and whom I knew well—Dr. Stevenson—asking him to tell Rhodes that I forgave him, and prayed for him night and morning. I do not know whether the message ever reached him. I suppose it did not; and yet

I believe that, had he got it, the poor Colossus would have died happier.

But all this has nothing to do with the appreciation of his character, which I am trying to make now—a character so complicated that I doubt whether any one has really understood it, or even whether he understood it himself. Candour was never his strong point; it is a positive fact he never would admit that his treatment of his Dutch friends could not be forgiven by them, and that it had constituted something out of the common. For him Mr. Schreiner and Mr. Hofmeyr were enemies, not people he had betrayed, and though he was eager to be once more upon good terms with them, yet he wished them to own themselves in the wrong, not to forgive the way in which he had wronged them.

He never would say what it was he really wanted; it was for others to understand him, and to bear the consequences of not having done so properly, when events did not turn out as he had anticipated; he was always ready to disavow those who had worked for him, or followed his lead, and yet there were moments when he could sacrifice himself, and rise to true greatness. One of the secrets to which he owed his large successes lay in his unerring instinct of what it was necessary he should do, when confronted by difficulties, no matter of what nature. He had, what is so essential in politics, an unfailing tact, and together with it, a most extraordinary facility for changing his opinions according to the exigencies of the moment.

Take for instance his conduct towards the Emperor William. After having loudly expressed his detestation of the Kaiser, he became one of his most enthusiastic admirers. It was again a case in point of what flattery could do with him, as well as of his power of forgiveness when the parties who had offended him ate humble pie, and consented to worship at his shrine.

A conversation I had with him one day, gave me an insight as to his inward feeling, which, I believe, few people even among his most intimate friends have ever had. I had been reading a book called *The Martyrdom of Man*, by Winwood Reade—a most remarkable work, which, by its clever arguments against the existence of a Divinity, could not fail to make a profound impression upon the mind of any one who had thought seriously over this particular matter. One day, during lunch at Groote Schuur, I accidentally mentioned it, adding that it was uncanny, and had caused me some sleepless nights. Rhodes started. 'I know the book,' he exclaimed; 'it is a creepy book. I read it the first year I was in Kimberley, fresh from my father's parsonage, and you may imagine the impression which it produced upon me, in such a place as a mining camp.' He stopped for a moment, then added in a serious tone which I can hear even now, 'That book has made me what I am.' He went on discussing it for a long time, but I shall never forget the peculiar way in which he said these words: 'It has made me what I am.'

I could well imagine the impression produced on his powerful mind by a work which, by its negation of the existence of a Supreme Master, to whom we are accountable for all our actions, gave him, so to say, a reason to justify in his own eyes many things which will never be forgiven him. In a mining camp, where morality is an unknown factor, where the struggle for life does not spare human life, the seeds sown into his intelligence by a book of the kind I am speaking of, were bound to produce an appalling effect by removing the only barrier which could have restrained him, the fear of having, on the day without morrow of eternity, to meet One before whom human triumphs melt away into that vanity of which speaketh the Preacher.

Had Mr. Rhodes possessed faith, he would have indeed conquered the world. As it was, he only terrified it. All his life he remained in want of that something which hope and love can give. He felt this himself, and at the bottom of his heart there was a vague fear of the unknown, of what he was to meet hereafter. He hated the idea of death, had an absolute horror of sickness in any shape or form, and, though a brave man in appearance, was in certain things an arrant coward. There was in his nature a kind of vague regret for something he had missed, an unexpressed and unacknowledged dread of having after all to own, one day, that there existed a Being, before whom he would not be able to play the game, which old Pope Pius VI. described so well when

Napoleon tried it with him: 'Tragediante.' 'Commediante.'

Mr. Rhodes was also an actor in some things, but I believe it was always unknown to himself. He had a power of assimilation, an extraordinary memory, and a marvellous way of appropriating to his own use any idea or remark made by others. The amalgamation of the Kimberley mines was not invented by him, and yet it is to be doubted whether any one else would have been capable to bring it about. The concessions obtained from Lobengula had been applied for by other people, and yet he was the only one to induce the dusky monarch to grant them. The only thing which was really the original idea of Mr. Rhodes, was the organization of De Beers into the powerful political instrument it has become, and it is probable that he had it in view when he worked so hard to ensure the amalgamation of these mines.

His conduct during the war was consistent with all he had done before it broke out; it had the same ambitions and the same want of principle which have characterised so many of his political actions. It proceeded from his belief in his own ability, and his confidence that all he did was well done. And this belief in a certain sense was a true one, for it cannot be denied that had he been allowed years ago to do what he wanted, South Africa would be to-day a prosperous country, instead of the heap of ruins it has become.

In spite of all these defects, faults and errors,

he was a man one could not help loving when one knew him well. Indeed, it was always a case of love or hatred. Indifference was impossible towards this strange being who, with all the vices, the arrogance, the overbearing insolence of the race to which he belonged, possessed also an uncommon attractiveness which drew towards him even his most passionate detractors. But the Rhodes of the last three years, was, as Mr. Dormer rightly says in his remarkable book, *Vengeance as a Policy in Africanderland*, no longer the Rhodes of former days. Bad influences had completely mastered him, and, in spite of his affected cynicism, remorse was grinding him down; only, instead of frankly acknowledging it, he tried to revenge himself upon others for his own follies and mistakes. For women he had a supreme contempt, and at the same time was more under their influence than the world suspected or guessed. He liked to see high-born ladies at his feet; there as in everything else he liked to conquer. His temperament was naturally shy, and his curious way of speaking often produced, especially at first, an unpleasant impression. He had at times an irresistible impulse to tell the truth, much as he would have liked to suppress it. Thus, meeting Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace, the author of a celebrated book about Russia, at dinner at Sandringham, he could not help telling him, that it was in that book he found the idea of the Glen Grey Act, adding, 'You are the real author of it.'

For money he had an inordinate love, and

at the same time a supreme contempt. But he was guilty of the same mistake which Bismarck made—he believed that every man had his price. On two memorable occasions he found this was not the case. The first one was a blow to his vanity, the second broke his heart, and sent him unforgiving and rebellious to his grave. He died as he had lived, deserving of better things, neither properly appreciated, nor sufficiently loved, an enigma of which the solution will never be found. Of his immense labours the very traces will soon disappear, others will reap and are already reaping the benefit of them. The country that bears his name is destined to be absorbed in the Empire of which he had counted to become one of the masters. Of all he did, planned, achieved, nothing will soon remain but the evil, for according to Shakespeare's famous words, the good he ever did 'is interred with his bones.' In Europe his name is seldom mentioned, in South Africa it is already half forgotten; even the attempt to raise him a public monument has failed. The *Sic transit gloria mundi* has never been more forcibly illustrated than in the case of Cecil Rhodes.

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